DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 238 291 FL 014 157

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|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Brumfit, Christopher, Ed. |
| TITLE | Learning and Teaching Languages for Communication: Applied Linguistics Perspectives. |
| INSTITUTION | Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, London (England). |
| REPORT NO | ISBN-0-903466-69-4 |
| PUB DATE | 83 |
| NOTE | 127p.; Papers presented at the Annual Meeting of the British Association for Applied Linguistics (Newcastle upon Tyne, England, September 1982). |
| AVAILABLE FROM | Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research, 20 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AP, England. |
| PUB TYPE | Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Books (010) |
| EDRS PRICE | MF01/PC06 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | *Applied Linguistics; Classroom Communication; Cognitive Style; *Communicative Competence (Languages); Course Evaluation; *Curriculum Development; Educational Television; Educational Theories; English; Evaluation Methods; Foreign Countries; Interaction; Intonation; Language of Instruction; *Second Language Instruction; *Testing |
| IDENTIFIERS | British Association for Applied Linguistics |

ABSTRACT

The papers include: "Applied Linguistics and Comunicative Language Teaching" (Christopher Brumfit); "Evaluation of the East Midlands Graded Assessment Feasibility Study" (Elaine S. Freedman); "Aspects of Standardisation within a Communicative Assessment Syllabus" (Nicola Lees); "Experimenting with Interaction" (Roy Dunning); "The Evaluation of a 'Communicative' French Course" (Brian Parkinson); "The Teacher's Use of First Language and Foreign Language as Means of Communication in the Foreign Language Classroom" (Rosamond Mitchell); "Discourse in a Television Language Teaching Programme: Implications for Learning" (Thomas Bloor); "Yes, But What Do You Mean by 'Communication'?" (John L. M. Trim); "Defined Syllabus: Crutch or Straitjacket" (Brian Page); "Contrastive Pragmatics and the Foreign Language Learner's Personality" (William T. Littlewood); and "Speaking English with the Appropriate Degree of Conviction" (Janet Holmes). (MSE)

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ED238291

# Learning and teaching languages for communication:

# applied linguistic perspectives

Papers from the Annual Meeting of the
British Association for Applied Linguistics
held at the
University of Newcastle upon Tyne
September 1982

Edited by Christopher Brumfit

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1983
Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research
for
British Association for Applied Linguistics

First published 1983
©1983 Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research
ISBN 0 903466 69 4
Printed in Great Britain by Multiplex Techniques Ltd
Published by the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research
20 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AP

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## INTRODUCTION : APPLIED LINGUISTICS AND COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

**Christopher Brumfit** (Chairman, British Association for Applied Linguistics)

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The British Association for Applied Linguistics is an organisation whose main activities, apart from the Newsletter and professional mailings to members, are specialist seminars and an annual, less specialised conference. The purpose of the annual conference is to enable members and visitors to report work in progress, both inside and outside the chosen theme for the meeting. In 1982, for the meeting held at Newcastle University on 17-19 September, the theme of communicative language teaching attracted an interesting group of papers of which a selection is presented here.

One reason for presenting these papers to a wider public is that many of them offer data, in the shape of detailed analyses of language teaching and learning activity, which is all too rarely provided for discussion of educational innovation. Three papers relate to the East Midlands Graded Assessment Feasibility Study (Dunning, Freedman and Lees), and three others (Parkinson, Mitchell and Bloor) discuss and illustrate other language teaching projects. Three other papers examine problems of pedagogic theory in the light of our experience of working in the communicative movement. Trim provides a comprehensive and authoritative overview of current doubts and difficulties, Page considers the issue of the role of the defined syllabus, and Littlewood explores the relationship between a developing theoretical area, pragmatics, and the language learner's personality, developing in a direction which is certain to be central to our work of the next decade. Nor is the direct application of linguistics to problems of defining communication neglected, for Holmes examines in detail one particular aspect of sociolinguistic competence.

Some traditions of applied linguistics, particularly the American, have tended to limit the term 'applied linguistics' to the position exemplified by Holmes' paper, but this has never been BAAL's definition, and this collection of papers well illustrates the way in which linguistics interacts with other disciplines in providing tentative solutions to specific practical problems. Accepting the term 'communicative' not in a polemical sense, but simply as a convenient cover for the historical movement in language teaching which has had the greatest impact in the past decade, the writers of these papers have addressed themselves, variously, to problems of description and evaluation of classroom practice, or of materials, to the assessment of relevant literature from other disciplines, to examination of practical and philosophical difficulties resulting from past educational experience, and to consideration of the implications of the structure of language and language behaviour to the description of language used communicatively. The last

decade has been rich in speculation, but with the notable exceptions of a few researchers such as those working in Birmingham on discourse analysis little in British applied linguistics has been explicitly data-based, although there has been important work in closely-related areas such as social psychology and sociolinguistics. This is not because British applied linguists are convinced idealists reluctant to dirty their hands with technical matters so much as because of the bias of funding in British higher education and the availability of research staff and students. Most British applied linguists emerge from years of experience in teaching, speech therapy and other professions at an age when funding is difficult to obtain and family responsibilities discourage long-term commitment to self-financed research. Yet if the impact of British innovation in language teaching is not to be wasted, the kind of descriptive work which is beginning to emerge in these papers needs heavy support. In the past decade there have been major contributions within Britain (from people all of whom are active members of BAAL) to the theory of languages for specific purposes, notional-functional proposals (both within and outside the work of the Council of Europe), studies of interlanguage, communicative methodology, discourse analysis and many other areas directly relevant to second and foreign language teaching. Yet, because of general cutbacks in education and the traditional patterns of research funding, the exploitation and investigation of these areas is already beginning to move away from Britain. We can only hope that the movement towards an empirical base reflected in many of these papers will not be allowed to wither and waste.

It would be unwise, though, for too pessimistic a view to predominate at this stage, for these papers also illustrate another of the strengths of British applied linguistics - the close relationship between theoretical and practical discussion. Writers like Littlewood and Page are not speculating from outside the teaching profession, but from continuing involvement with innovation and attempts at improvement, and one of BAAL's major functions is undoubtedly to ensure that researchers, theorists and practitioners are not only people who talk to each other regularly, but also are very often the same people at different times and places. While we must continue to guard against the dangerous split between theorist and teacher, we should also recognise that the chances of a close relationship between the two are as strong if not stronger in Britain than in almost any other country. But it is precisely for this reason that we cannot afford to be propelled, by decision-makers who withhold research student places and research funds, into a tradition of excessive speculation - nor can we afford to insist on an independent profession of isolated and superior applied linguistics researchers. These papers are indications of what we could be doing on a much larger scale.

# COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHING: PROBLEMS OF DESCRIPTION AND EVALUATION

# 1. EVALUATION OF THE EAST MIDLANDS GRADED ASSESSMENT FEASIBILITY STUDY

**Elaine S Freedman**

University of Leicester School of Education

The evaluation of the East Midlands Graded Assessment Feasibility Study forms part of the work of the East Midland Regional Examinations Board CSE Research Project. Evaluation of the Study has developed hand-in-hand with the Study itself since its inception in autumn 1979, and the paper describes the three phases of evaluation which have taken place. These are: 1979-80 pupil and teacher attitudes; 1980-81 pupil attitudes and achievement; 1981-82 pupil achievement at Level One, and pupil attitudes at Level Two of the Graded Assessment guidelines. The problems of design of such evaluations are discussed, the results of the 1979-80 evaluation are reported, and their implications explored.

In 1978, a working party was set up by the Modern Languages Regional Subject Panel of the East Midland Regional Examinations Board, with a brief to consider graded assessment procedures for modern languages, particularly, in the first instance, French. As a result, Roy Dunning was asked to co-ordinate a study in the East Midlands, to determine the feasibility of defining language ability in performance terms for a series of levels of attainment in the secondary school.

It was proposed that a Level One in French, accredited by the Examinations Board on behalf of the county education departments involved, would be available to schools in September 1981, the first certificates being awarded at the end of the 1981-82 school year, and this has now happened.

In the two school years preceding its certification, 1979-80 and 1980-81, Level One would be tried out with the help of volunteer schools, and the writer would evaluate the pupils' attitudes (1979-80), and also their achievement (1980-81); this process of feasibility trials and evaluation was to accompany each new level as it developed.

Initially, Level One French was planned to consist of five units, but only the first three of these formed the basis of the 1979-80 Feasibility Study. Units Four and Five entered the study in 1980-81. In fact, Level One has since (1981-82) been modified to three units, but the current three units are not entirely identical in content to those used in 1979-80.

The topics of the original three units, upon which the results reported later in this paper are based, were:

UNIT ONE - IDENTIFYING ONESELF AND OTHERS : Name, nationality, address, brothers and sisters, age

UNIT TWO - HOUSE AND HOME : Type, location, amenities

UNIT THREE - LIFE AT HOME : Physical descriptions, work and daily routines of self and family

and each unit involved the giving, getting, confirming and denying of information in the various topic areas.

Since the first evaluation information was gathered in March 1980, the Feasibility Study has grown in many ways, in terms of the numbers of units developed, in terms of the extensiveness of the evaluation, and most markedly in terms of the numbers of pupils, teachers and schools taking part:

1979-80

LEVEL ONE, UNITS 1, 2, 3

30 teachers

1101 pupils in 47 classes at 15 schools

1980-81

| LEVEL ONE, UNITS 1, 2, 3 | LEVEL ONE, UNITS (3) 4, 5 (Later to become Level Two) |
|---|---|
| ← 80 teachers → | |
| Approx 3000 pupils in 117 classes at 25 schools | 930 pupils in 33 classes at 9 schools |

1981-82

| LEVEL ONE | LEVEL TWO |
|---|---|
| ← 120 teachers → | |
| Approx 5000 pupils in 183 classes at 32 schools | Approx 2500 pupils in 94 classes at 16 schools |

Although it seems strange in retrospect, with so many teachers and pupils now taking part, when the Feasibility Study began in autumn 1979, one could not foresee the response that it would evoke. The first priority was to get the teaching and assessment under way in the schools concerned. But the

second priority, scarcely less important, was to obtain feedback from the teachers about what was happening in their individual schools and classrooms, and to find out whether the scheme was working successfully. With the teaching and assessment methods in such an early stage of development, it seemed both unreasonable and impracticable to elicit information concerning the pupils' attainment at this point. The teachers were developing their materials and trying out techniques at this time, and monitoring the achievement of their pupils might have yielded results in which the pupils' progress and the teachers' progress would be inextricably linked. It was for these reasons that the primary aim of the evaluation in this first year of the Feasibility Study was to investigate the attitudes of the participating pupils and teachers. The link between positive motivation and learning success is well-known, and it was therefore felt that a suitable starting-point for the evaluation would be to see whether, in fact, those taking part in the study were enjoying the experience. If they were, and if the level of the work was found to be appropriate for the students, then there would be a basis for a decision concerning the continuation of the scheme into a second year and more detailed evaluation. Furthermore, one would be able to determine whether, as previous work has indicated, the attitudes of the pupils were linked to those of their teacher. Designing this evaluation proved, in practice, to be more complex than the simple aim of monitoring attitudes would suggest.

In most research one aims to control a given situation in order to investigate it. The ways in which the situation is 'controlled' constitute the design of the experiment, and the purpose of the design is to maximise the validity of the investigation. (The validity of an experiment is concerned with whether the experiment measures what it sets out to measure, without the interference of extraneous factors.) This is most frequently done by taking two groups of people, testing them both in some way, subjecting one group only to a particular event and then re-testing both groups, in order to ascertain the effect of the event. The group which does not undergo the event is called the 'control' group.

During the course of the Feasibility Study the question has arisen as to whether a control group should be included in the study. Although this idea appears attractive at first sight, it does bring insurmountable problems. Being able to compare the attitudes of pupils working on graded assessment with those pupils not doing so, would seem to be a useful way of demonstrating whether or not graded assessment engendered more favourable attitudes than other methods of teaching. However, this type of investigation has two major drawbacks, which would lead to the results produced being totally invalid. Firstly, the schools taking part in the study had volunteered to do so, which would mean that they would very likely be 'different', in some real but indefinable way, from schools which decided not to participate when the offer had been made. This would in turn mean that various factors might be at work which one could not attribute specifically to the graded assessment work itself. If pupils' attitudes here were favourable and those at non-participating schools were not, one could not say with certainty that the reason for the difference was the graded

assessment, although it might have been. Secondly, even assuming that the schools were broadly comparable, one would have no way of comparing teaching methods without monitoring the work and attitudes of the pupils in the non-participating schools. If the schools had decided not to take part in the scheme, then they would be very unlikely to furnish the detailed information necessary to make a valid comparison between them and the schools which had decided to participate. One would therefore have no control of the variables (or factors) at work, and valid comparison would be impossible. The idea of using a control group of schools was therefore not taken up; it was felt that its introduction would produce more sources of invalidity than would its omission. Instead one would monitor the attitudes of the pupils and the teachers involved, in a descriptive fashion, to try to gauge their response to the graded assessment work.

The pattern of the design adopted in this first year of the study was necessarily simpler than it was to become in subsequent years. This new work placed considerable strain on the teachers involved and it seemed unwise to expect them to administer, and the pupils to complete, any attitude questionnaires before teaching began. In subsequent years this was done, but by then the original group of teachers was accustomed to the work. In the case of teachers who joined the scheme in later years, they were coming into a far more organised framework, where they could benefit from the pioneers' experience, and the extra form-filling did not prove to be as much of a problem as it undoubtedly would have been at the very beginning. The pattern for the 1979-80 evaluation was:

LEVEL ONE, UNITS 1, 2, 3.

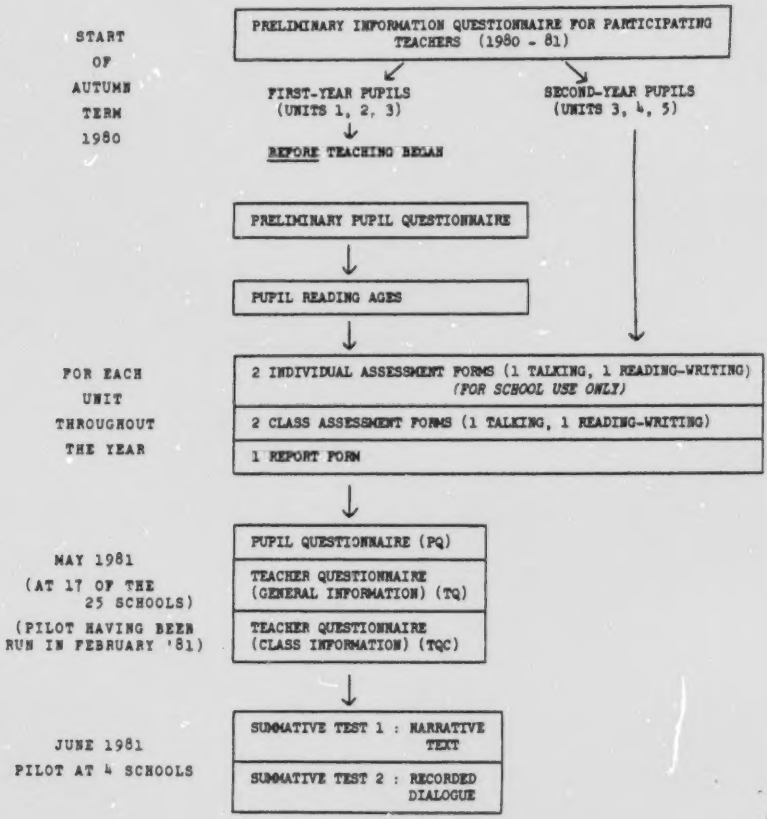
MARCH 1980

| PRELIMINARY INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPATING TEACHERS |
|---|

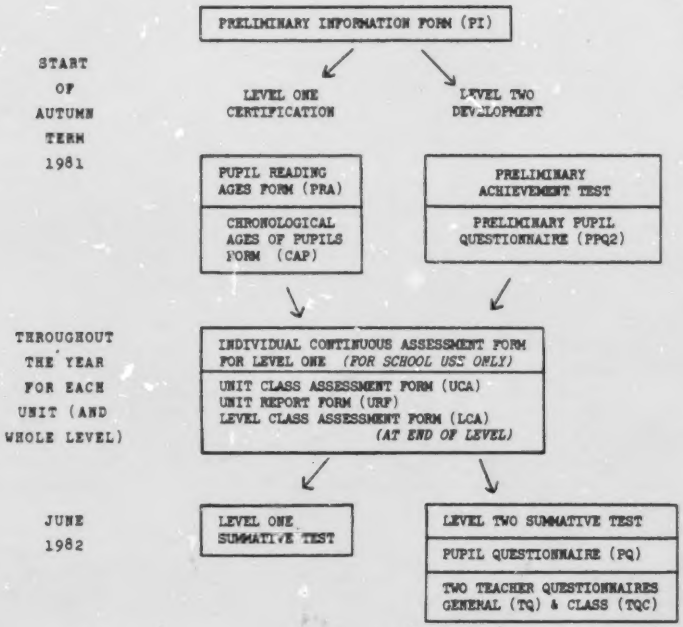
| TEACHER OPINION QUESTIONNAIRE |
|---|
| PUPIL OPINION QUESTIONNAIRE |

The design has, of course, evolved (and needed to evolve) since then, expanding to include attitude-testing of the pupils before and after the year's teaching and assessment; the acquisition of pupils' reading ages and

chronological ages to try to establish a guide to their level of general ability; the collection of more detailed information from the teachers concerning their graded assessment work in general, and their experiences with individual classes; and organised monitoring of pupils' achievement, in order to investigate links between attitude and achievement. However, as the diagram below shows, the pattern of the 1980-81 evaluation became rather unwieldy:


START OF AUTUMN TERM 1980
PRELIMINARY INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARTICIPATING TEACHERS (1980 - 81)
FIRST-YEAR PUPILS (UNITS 1, 2, 3)
SECOND-YEAR PUPILS (UNITS 3, 4, 5)
BEFORE TEACHING BEGAN
PRELIMINARY PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE
PUPIL READING AGES
FOR EACH UNIT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR
2 INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT FORMS (1 TALKING, 1 READING-WRITING) (FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY)
2 CLASS ASSESSMENT FORMS (1 TALKING, 1 READING-WRITING)
1 REPORT FORM
MAY 1981 (AT 17 OF THE 25 SCHOOLS) (PILOT HAVING BEEN RUN IN FEBRUARY '81)
PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE (PQ)
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE (GENERAL INFORMATION) (TQ)
TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE (CLASS INFORMATION) (TQC)
JUNE 1981 PILOT AT 4 SCHOOLS
SUMMATIVE TEST 1 : NARRATIVE TEXT
SUMMATIVE TEST 2 : RECORDED DIALOGUE

Thus in 1981-82, the design was somewhat refined, both in terms of reducing the number of forms, and in making the forms as clear, concise and labour-saving for the teachers as possible. The 1981-82 design was:


PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PI)
START OF AUTUMN TERM 1981
LEVEL ONE CERTIFICATION
LEVEL TWO DEVELOPMENT
PUPIL READING AGES FORM (PRA)
CHRONOLOGICAL AGES OF PUPILS FORM (CAP)
PRELIMINARY ACHIEVEMENT TEST
PRELIMINARY PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE (PPQ2)
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR FOR EACH UNIT (AND WHOLE LEVEL)
INDIVIDUAL CONTINUOUS ASSESSMENT FORM FOR LEVEL ONE (FOR SCHOOL USE ONLY)
UNIT CLASS ASSESSMENT FORM (UCA)
UNIT REPORT FORM (URF)
LEVEL CLASS ASSESSMENT FORM (LCA)
(AT END OF LEVEL)
JUNE 1982
LEVEL ONE SUMMATIVE TEST
LEVEL TWO SUMMATIVE TEST
PUPIL QUESTIONNAIRE (PQ)
TWO TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRES GENERAL (TQ) & CLASS (TQC)

Writing the forms for the evaluation has in fact proved considerably more difficult than one would have expected. First of all there is the overall problem of trying to balance the need for accurate and detailed information with the need to prevent the teachers from being overloaded with form-filling. In addition to the usual questionnaire-design difficulties of ambiguity, the pupils' questionnaires have to be short, extremely clear and above all, not intimidating. Given that teachers may well have several classes working with graded assessment, and may be dealing with at least two levels of the guidelines, one has to be particularly careful to keep even the physical level of the work down. For example, when the teachers have to put the names of an entire class on more than one form, even little things, like keeping the name slots the same size, so that they can photocopy the list and stick it on the different forms, become important considerations. However, the over-riding consideration which makes brevity essential is that one really must not make impossible demands on teachers or pupils, mostly because of the psychological effects, but also for practical

reasons. A long pupil questionnaire takes up valuable teaching time, and teacher questionnaires that are long and numerous (and repetitious where several classes are concerned) take up preparation time.

Not all the information gathered has been in questionnaire style. There was for example the recent problem of administering a two-part summative test to 5000 Level One candidates - by post, without school visits. The difficulty here was not only an administrative one, but also one of experimental reliability, because one cannot afford to have the tests being given in varying ways in the different schools. This was perhaps an extreme case because of the way the tests had originally been conceived, but an extremely detailed two-page letter listing thirteen steps for administration and marking procedures was needed to resolve the problem. Indeed, one really should pay tribute to the participating teachers who have coped very well indeed with the quantity and the often unavoidable complexity of forms, and on the whole have managed to keep to approximate deadlines for them.

Returning to the 1979-80 evaluation, the main aim was, of necessity, simple, and was primarily the acquisition of feedback from the pupils and teachers concerned. At the outset of a completely new venture it seemed reasonable to find out, at a very basic level, what the participants felt about the exercise. Three main sets of information were therefore collected in March 1980 from each of the 47 classes which took part: (a) a preliminary information questionnaire to be filled in by each teacher; (b) a pupil opinion questionnaire to be completed by each pupil; and (c) a teacher opinion questionnaire to be answered by each teacher, for each graded assessment class taught.

As well as requesting information about addresses and the type of school, the preliminary information questionnaire asked for details of each of the graded assessment classes taught by the respondent, including the name of the class, its year within the school, the numbers of boys and girls, their age range, and their general level of ability. Teachers were also asked how many French periods (of what length) the class had each week and how many of them were given over to graded assessment. In addition, information about any published course they might use was sought.

As the preliminary information questionnaires (giving the appropriate student numbers) were returned, copies of the pupil and teacher opinion questionnaires were sent out. The covering letter suggested that the teachers explained to the pupils what was meant by the 'new lessons' in terms which did not include 'graded assessment'. The whole purpose was to make the administration of the questionnaire appear as ordinary as possible to the pupils in order to minimise the 'Hawthorne Effect' (the phenomenon by which a person's performance tends to improve, or his behaviour to alter, if he knows that he is being studied).

The pupil opinion questionnaires themselves were anonymous, and apart from asking the names of their class, school and French teacher, comprised

five questions. These concerned: enjoyment of the teaching; difficulty of the teaching; interest of the teaching; enjoyment of the assessment; difficulty of the assessment. In addition, there was space for voluntary free comment.

The teacher opinion questionnaires were not anonymous, because a part of the aim of the evaluation was to compare pupils' reactions with those of their teachers. Knowing the name of each student's teacher one could then compare the two responses concerned. Each teacher answered a separate questionnaire for each graded assessment class taught, and the topics covered were:

- rate of progress
- enjoyment of the study
- preparation time for teaching and assessment
- teaching and assessment problems
- whether pupils enjoyed the teaching, assessment
- whether pupils found the level of difficulty appropriate
- pupils' progress

and there was space for free comment.

The results for 1979-80 were analysed in three main groupings:

1. The pupils' attitudes
2. The teachers' attitudes
3. The relationship between teacher and pupil attitudes.

**The pupils' attitudes**

The pupils' responses to the five attitude questions in the questionnaire showed that the majority were enjoying both the teaching and the assessment aspects of the graded assessment work, and these findings were substantiated by their voluntary comments. Some of these comments will be quoted at the end of this paper, because they sum up the whole atmosphere of the graded assessment work very effectively.

It seems unlikely that this general enthusiasm was merely the product of the Hawthorne Effect because:

(a) the relationships between the responses concerning enjoyment of the teaching and the level of difficulty were consistent;
(b) the more popular responses were <u>not</u> the most positive ones available, and had the Hawthorne Effect been operating to any considerable degree, one would have expected more responses designed to please the experimenter;
(c) there <u>were</u> negative responses in small but telling numbers, which, it would seem fair to suggest, make it more reasonable to accept the favourable ones as being considered and genuine.

It was in fact particularly encouraging to see that 70.6% of all the pupils (drawn as they were from the whole ability range) felt the level of difficulty of both the teaching and the assessment to be appropriate for them. Not only that, neither the enjoyment nor the difficulty of the teaching or the assessment was related to the ability level of the class involved, and lower-ability children showed the same degree of enthusiasm as their more able peers.

**The teachers' attitudes**

The vast majority of the teachers found their work on the study very enjoyable. The preparation of teaching and assessment materials was time-consuming, but this did not seem to detract from their enjoyment. Teaching was thought to involve more preparation time primarily because it was new, but assessment appeared to generate more problems, stemming from a complete re-orientation towards communicative testing. The teachers' enjoyment of the study was not connected to external factors like the ability level of their classes or whether graded assessment formed all or part of the French timetable of the classes concerned. The amount of Unit Two the class had completed did, however, seem to be a relevant factor, which may in turn have been a manifestation of the teacher's view of his or her own rate of progress.

Teachers thought that their pupils actively enjoyed both the teaching and the assessment elements of the work, and that its level of difficulty was appropriate for almost all of the children. Progress in over half the classes was thought to be better than that ordinarily expected, and in the others it was felt to be much the same. Even here, however, motivation was better than usual. The teachers' own enjoyment of the work was connected with their estimation of their pupils' enjoyment, but it is interesting to note that their judgements concerning the pupils' enjoyment, difficulty, and progress were independent of the level of ability of the classes concerned.

The overall impression formed from these findings is that the teachers were positively enthusiastic and very optimistic about graded assessment and their participation in the study. They were, however, aware of the attendant problems and these three quotations from the comments they made give a fair reflection of the majority viewpoint:

1. 'The concept is exciting, evokes a splendid response from the pupils. Has had a particularly good effect on the slower learners - very confidence-building.
   Problems
   1) Finding enough extra material to keep the brighter pupils keen and 'stretched'.
   2) Getting round to listen to every pupil and tick their efforts - danger of boredom here.
   3) Noise levels - especially when neighbours are unsympathetic.
   4) Preparation of progress cards very time-consuming.'

2. 'I feel that what they are able to do is about the same, but that there is apparently greater motivation especially amongst lower ability pupils where oral work is concerned. E.g. keener to practise thoroughly until they have mastered the question, response etc.'

3. 'In summary
   (i) maintains motivation
   (ii) involves pupils in meaningful communication
   (iii) time consuming concerning testing and preparing teaching materials etc.'

**The relationship between teacher and pupil attitudes**

There was indeed a close relationship between teacher and pupil opinions, confirming other research findings. The pupils' enjoyment of the teaching and the assessment did echo their teachers' enthusiasm, although the relationship was not as close for the enjoyment of assessment as for the enjoyment of teaching. It is not possible to determine from the figures whether the teachers influenced the pupils or vice versa, but as it is the teacher who initiates the teaching-learning process, it seems likely that it was the teachers who influenced the pupils. The pupils' enthusiasm may also, however, have in turn encouraged their teachers.

The teachers' views concerning their pupils' enjoyment of both the teaching and the assessment did tend to coincide with the pupils' own opinions, which would again seem to offer substantiation of the validity of the responses gathered. Where the teaching was concerned, the teachers if anything somewhat underestimated how much their pupils enjoyed it, whilst they rather tended to overestimate the children's enjoyment of the assessment. The majority of teachers and pupils agreed that the level of difficulty of the work was 'about right', where the pupils' view of the teaching was concerned, although there was no statistically significant relationship (that is, no relationship other than that which may have occurred by chance) between the teachers' impression of the difficulty their students experienced with the work as a whole, and the pupils' views of the difficulty of the assessment. The childrens' enjoyment of both the teaching and the assessment did seem to be connected with their teacher's estimation of the overall progress of the class. Where the teacher thought this to have been better than usually expected, larger proportions of their pupils tended to find the teaching and the assessment particularly enjoyable. Here again, though, it is hard to say whether the teacher thought progress better because his pupils were evidently enjoying the work, or the pupils were enjoying it because he was somehow communicating his pleasure at their progress.

All of these findings on the relationship between teacher and pupil opinion seem to suggest classroom situations where positive attitudes were being communicated from teacher to pupils, and from pupils to teacher, which would seem to be no bad thing. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of the teaching (and assessment) within the East Midlands scheme appears to be the way in

which the teachers and pupils have co-operated. The pupils, with their own progress-cards to tick off the steps of their progress, have participated actively in their own assessment, and teachers and pupils have also collaborated in producing cue-cards and other materials.

To return now briefly, in more general terms, to the overall scheme of the evaluation: in the work reported thus far, the evaluation was used to gather information, and that information was in turn used as part of the basis for deciding whether or not it would be of value to continue the scheme. The analysis of the data from 1980-81 and from 1981-82 will in addition provide a way of establishing the reliability, from school to school, of the teachers' assessments of their pupils' performance. As well as being assessed by their teacher, each pupil took a summative test at the end of the year (for Level One only in 1980-81, and for both Levels One and Two in 1981-82). There have also been procedures for the standardisation of assessment judgements, but the use of the summative test will have provided an extra method of monitoring reliability. With the results on the summative test as a factor common to all pupils, one will be able to see if the teachers' assessments from the various different schools (over 30) stand in the same general relationship to the summative test results, and thence by implication to each other. In this way the evaluation will not only be playing a part in moderating the assessments made in the course of the scheme, but also evaluating the standardisation procedures themselves.

As was mentioned earlier, the pupils' own comments, collected in the course of the 1979-80 evaluation, were particularly revealing. Perhaps one should in conclusion allow them to speak, most eloquently, for themselves:

1. 'I have found it very in jaurgable in The french lesson. And I like spoken more than eine yothe work.'

2. 'If I was lost in france and had to ask a police man where to go, if he asked me what my name and adress was or something like that I would hopefully be able to tell him and the policeman would soon be able to put me right.'

3. 'I Do not like FRench id rather do PE.'

4. 'I have learnt a lot of French this last term and it has been very enjoyable. I do my best to get all the answers right. I ALSO like the tests, because it re-assures me that I know what I have been taught ....'

5. 'I enjoy lissening to my friend because I learn my self when she says them.'

6. 'I dont no why you should learn to speak french there must be a reason.'

7. 'I have found this work better than the work we did before and its nice to know how I am getting on. It is a lot more fun doing it.'

## 2. ASPECTS OF STANDARDISATION WITHIN A COMMUNICATIVE ASSESSMENT SYLLABUS

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### INTRODUCTION: THE SYLLABUS

The East Midlands Graded Assessment Feasibility Study syllabus comprises at present three levels, each consisting of three units, all at different stages of definition. Level One, after experimentation over a period of eighteen months, was first certificated during the academic year 1981-82. At the end of this first year of certification, some slight changes were made to the syllabus, and it seems more than likely that similar adjustments will be made to each level as successive years see the scheme developing towards 16+. The term 'feasibility study' will be retained for the moment to allow for any changes which may show themselves necessary, either because of intrinsic factors - the organisation and progression of the syllabus itself - or extrinsic factors - the opinions and wishes of the participating teachers and of the Board. In any case, flexibility will continue to be permitted within the syllabus, with teachers choosing to a certain extent what language they want to teach to their pupils and the items for subsequent assessment.

The syllabus is an <u>assessment</u> syllabus, in that it specifies linguistic functions to be assessed for each unit, suggests exponents for these functions and describes ways of assessing the candidates' performance of these functions. Each of the three units at each level is concerned with a particular topic area, e.g. personal identification (Unit One), likes and dislikes (Unit Four). At Level One each pupil is tested on 80 oral items, 40 each seeking and giving information. At Level Two there is one assessment per unit of a more integrated, interactive type. The middle unit of the three (Unit Five), concerned with shopping and directions, requires the pupils to use language for transactional as well as informational purposes, i.e. language is used to obtain goods and services in addition to information. Following Widdowson (1978), the term 'talking' is used to designate the oral mode of assessment, since it includes listening and speaking.

The EMGAFS syllabus is unusual in assessing writing and reading, albeit optionally, from Level One onwards. Here again the term 'writing/reading' is used to embrace complementary aspects of performance in the written medium. At Level One the writing is simply supportive of 'talking', with the pupils being required to write what they have actually said (the scenario) and what they have found out about their partner (the report). At higher levels the writing and then reading should become more functional and communicative.

It should be made clear that the EMGAFS syllabus is an assessment but <u>not a</u>

testing syllebus - no centrally produced tests are supplied to schools, nor is the marking centrally administered in any way. The syllabus provides assessment guidelines, which are followed by each teacher individually in his or her own classroom. The pupils are assessed regularly in pairs, the scoring being done on the spot by the teacher. There are no CSE-type moderating procedures for the 'talking' mode, although samples of written work from across the ability range are submitted to Dr Roy Dunning after each unit. It seems probable that at higher levels, particularly 16+, some proportion of centrally devised and externally marked testing will be required by the Board for the sake of public credibility, but at Level One, financial and personnel restrictions preclude any sort of moderation.

Both in the thinking behind it and on paper the EMGAFS syllabus meets many of the criteria, defined by Keith Johnson and others, to qualify as a communicative syllabus. It is divided into topic areas, each embracing a range of functions, general and specific notions. The assessment strategies utilise the concept of the information gap, and of use of language for transactional purposes. Furthermore the guidelines specify the criteria by which assessments should be made. At Level One the two criteria are acceptability and appropriacy. At Level Two a further criterion is added - grammatical cohesion. These criteria are defined as follows:

'Acceptable means that, in the view of the monitoring teacher, the utterance would be meaningfully interpreted by a native French speaker in that context', i.e. it would be understood as French by a native speaker.

'Appropriate means that, in the view of the monitoring teacher, the utterance meaningfully expresses the intention of the speaker in that context', i.e. it would be understood in the way in which the speaker intended.

'Grammatically cohesive means showing a degree of conformity with the main patterns of word-order, subject-verb and gender concord in French'.

The phrase 'in the view of the monitoring teacher' points to the subjective nature of these criteria. The assessors are required to imagine themselves as a French native speaker - but what sort of native speaker? An adult? A teenager? One who knows some English? One who has a high tolerance of grammatical error? One who is sympathetic to foreigners? Surely in context a native speaker would intervene, re-phrase, use non-verbal devices to communicate if necessary? Clearly the criteria are open to a wide range of interpretations. There are no established standards to which one can refer, since the implementation of communicative criteria implies a completely new attitude to assessment for all teachers.

The teacher is being asked to judge whether an utterance would be understood to carry the meaning intended by the speaker in the context in which it was uttered. The monitoring teacher's attention must shift from features within an utterance - tenses, pronunciation, endings, agreements, etc - to the utterance as a whole, and beyond that to its linguistic and social

context. Clearly a great deal of teacher re-education is required, which will be achieved through regular meetings and in-service work, allowing teachers to exchange and develop ideas. In this way also therefore the EMGAFS syllabus is communicative: it can succeed only if there is communication amongst the participating schools, and between them and the syllabus designers, co-ordinators and evaluators.

The syllabus is an assessment syllabus, and it is the teachers themselves who are responsible for selecting the items they wish to assess. They are free to teach whichever items they like in whatever way they choose. Nevertheless, the syllabus implies some sort of methodology, the implementation of certain teaching strategies, if only so that the pupils be suitably prepared for assessment as specified in the guidelines. If they are to be assessed in pairs, performing exchanges mediated by cue-cards where information is encoded symbolically or in French, and noting down the information acquired, then one would expect to find teachers providing their pupils with opportunities to practise this type of activity. It is also likely that the early stages of a teaching unit will be geared towards setting up these opportunities. Less tangibly but very importantly, having to come to grips with a communicative syllabus arranged according to communicative categories, and attempting to assimilate communicative criteria, will no doubt have effects on the teachers' view of their role and of what the aims of teaching a foreign language are.

## THE RESEARCH

The aim of my research is to investigate the extent to which the guidelines of a communicative assessment syllabus and the criteria specified therein exert a standardising influence, firstly on the classroom practices of the participating teachers, and secondly on the judgements made by these teachers of their pupils' performance during assessment in the oral and written modes. It is necessary to bear in mind, however, that there are influences working in two directions. The syllabus itself - its content and suggested strategies - and the interpretation of the criteria have evolved over a period of time, through regular interaction amongst all those involved in the Feasibility Study, so that the syllabus was eventually drawn up after a large degree of consensus had been reached. It nevertheless permits a wide range of interpretation within a communicative framework.

The research has comprised two main lines of investigation:

1. Systematic classroom observation of eight teachers throughout the first year of certification of Level One.

2. Organisation and monitoring regional standardisation procedures for the assessment of Level One.

Data were collected throughout the school year 1981-82, and are now being prepared for full analysis. At this stage, therefore, it is possible only to describe how the data were gathered and to indicate some of the areas

which seem likely to merit closer attention and more detailed discussion.

## SYSTEMATIC CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

A look at Mirrors for behavior (Simon and Boyer 1974) or British mirrors (Galton 1978) will reveal that, although there are many different observation instruments for use in the classroom, the inventories include very few developed specifically for the foreign language classroom. The only one of 41 examples in British mirrors is the Wragg system, which is a modified version of the Flanders system, rather than a newly devised instrument.

The members of the Stirling project became aware of the lack of suitable instruments for use in their investigations of 'Skills and strategies in modern language teaching'. Ros Mitchell discusses the issues in 'A review of systematic observation instruments used for the analysis of FL classroom interaction'. The Stirling project went on to develop their own analysis system which has been applied successfully and yielded a large body of interesting and valuable data.

Largely for the same reasons as those given by the Stirling project, it seemed necessary for me to devise an original observation instrument, bearing in mind the limitations on an observer working alone throughout the year. It appeared advisable at least to start observing eight teachers, to allow for the possibility of one or two not providing sufficient data by the end of the year. The restrictions on timing imposed by dealing with eight separate timetables and by arranging visits so that Teacher X was not always subjected to scrutiny on Friday afternoons made it impracticable to record the lessons on video or sound cassette. It was, therefore, necessary to elaborate a pencil-and-paper method which could be comfortably handled. Above all, of course, the instrument had to provide a means of recording those features of the lesson which were of particular interest. The syllabus guidelines created expectations about the teaching strategies and pupil activities which were likely to occur more or less frequently in the communicative classroom. My intention was to measure to what extent these expectations were met in the course of the year.

After much discussion with colleagues in Leicester involved in classroom observational research (the ORACLE project) and extensive trial and error, a manageable system was eventually elaborated. Its reliability was tested by monitoring a lesson twice - once 'live' and once from a tape-recording. Mostly by means of a time-line display, the progression of a lesson could be recorded. The record sheet could show:

- which language the teacher used
- what the language was used for (presenting, questioning, answering, explaining, routine procedures, discipline, asides)
- how the class was occupied (as a class, in pairs, individually)

- what the pupils were doing (listening, asking, answering, repeating, looking, reading, drawing, writing, talking)

- which materials and means of presentation were being used (blackboard, OHP, flash cards, cue-cards, books, worksheets, tapes, progress cards).

In all sections it was possible to record a combination of categories.

The pupils were considered to be 'talking' when they were in a situation which permitted them to take turns at their own pace and to communicate within a range of choices. For example, when the pupils were occupied in pairs working with cue-cards, they could structure and pace the exchange themselves, reversing roles at will. This was different from question-and-answer work in class, where each participant is expected to fulfil a particular role (seeker or giver of information, non-verbal observer) at any given moment, and where in most cases the number of possible pupil utterances is highly constrained.

During the course of the lesson, short notes were made of the focus of each activity and any significant quotations from teacher or pupils were recorded. After the lesson, fuller observations were written up with particular attention being given to any instances of meaningful, communicative activity. By this was meant activity where participants were supplying real or fictitious information which their interlocutors did not already possess, thereby filling an information gap.

Over the year, a total of 197 lessons was observed, the analysis of which is as yet in only the preliminary stages. Nevertheless, it is already possible to spot variations amongst the teachers, for example, in the rate at which they worked through the units. Moreover the proportion of lessons providing opportunities for pair work and individual work was far from standardised amongst the teachers observed. One included pair work in over 70% of the lessons observed, whereas for another teacher the figure was only just over 20%. (These percentages include pair work done for assessment purposes.) Full analysis of the data should show the extent to which working towards the first level of a communicative assessment syllabus has a standardising influence on the classroom practices of the participating teachers.

## FOLLOWING UP CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

Throughout the year all the teachers being observed were extremely co-operative, not minding if visits had to be re-arranged at the last minute. Once or twice my arrival was completely unexpected! Consequently it seems safe to claim that the observed lessons were not planned or modified specially for the observer's benefit. Regular meetings, both formal and informal, provided opportunities for discussing matters as they arose - not only questions of teaching and assessment but also various individual pupil, departmental and school problems. This furnished additional insight into the teachers' attitudes towards teaching and assessment and into their theoretical knowledge and practical involvement. At the end of the year

each teacher was interviewed to elicit impressions of the first certificated year of Level One - with regard to their own classes, their department and school, the East Midlands as a whole, and also concerning communicative criteria, standardisation and future developments in the syllabus. The tape-recorded interviews will provide further evidence of both the similarities and the variation amongst teachers working to the same set of guidelines of a communicative syllabus.

## STANDARDISING COMMUNICATIVE ASSESSMENT

The syllabus guidelines specify a way of assessing pupils' performance that is new for most modern languages teachers in several ways. Firstly, it must be remembered that many such teachers are unused to assessing their pupils' ability in oral work, even more so at such an early stage. The first block of testing for Level One is usually carried out within the first six weeks of the first year, when the pupils' performance is necessarily very rudimentary. It should also be borne in mind that this is often the pupils' first experience of a 'test' in any subject.

The assessment is further unusual in that the pupils are assessed in pairs with their exchanges being facilitated by cue-cards. They are to be considered successful if they fulfil certain linguistic functions such as seeking and giving information, requesting goods or services and initiating and completing an exchange. The criteria by which the success is to be measured are the communicative criteria of acceptability and appropriacy. All these features imply the need for a great deal of effort from the participating teachers, both to grasp the mechanics of organising the assessment and, to an even greater extent, to implement the communicative criteria in the framework of a functional assessment.

At Level One both the spoken and written items are scored on a Yes/No basis. Each item is either rated acceptable and appropriate and receives one mark, or fails to meet either or both of the criteria, thus scoring zero. There are no half marks or overall impression marks, each item being considered discretely. A simple example will illustrate how discrepancies can arise when this marking system is applied with communicative criteria as the rationale for the awarding of marks. At a plenary meeting of schools embarking on Level One in early October 1981, teachers were asked to score 34 spoken items and 31 written items. The degree of unanimity in accepting or rejecting items was as follows:

| | No. of items | No. of items scored unanimously |
|---|---|---|
| TALKING | 34 | 26 ( = 76%) |
| WRITING | 31 | 21 ( = 68%) |
| TOTAL | 65 | 47 ( = 73%) |

It can be seen that 27% of the items were open to dispute, with teachers tending to be more ambivalent about the written than the spoken items. In fact, one third of the written items met with divided opinions amongst the assessors.

Since the assessment of Level One was to be carried out by the teachers in their own class-time, with no external moderation, it was clear to all concerned that, in the light of this meeting, standardisation procedures were necessary to counteract the inevitable subjectivity of the interpretation of communicative criteria. Consequently, all thirty schools were committed to being represented at one standardisation meeting for each unit. The schools were arranged in seven area groups for this purpose. At the meetings the schools' representatives were to discuss samples of their pupils' oral and written performance from the unit in question, and to attempt to extrapolate from their judgements the criteria that they were applying. It was not the intention that the meetings should lead teachers to dash back to school and hurriedly scale their marks up or downwards. The hope was rather that through meeting regularly and discussing the issues involved, they would gradually achieve a larger degree of standardisation in their assessments and a deeper understanding of the communicative criteria.

The second part of my research consisted of attending and monitoring as many as possible of the area group standardisation meetings. A large number of samples of oral and written work was collected, from which a master tape and file were compiled. These will be used as material for a fuller analysis of acceptability and appropriacy. Issues arising at the standardisation meetings tended to fall into three categories:

- Administration of assessment
- Assessment of talking
- Assessment of writing/reading

These are discussed in full in a forthcoming publication. Summarising the problems encountered in the assessment of both modes of performance, it can be said that the difficulty lay not in isolating the mistakes, but in deciding at what point mistakes would interfere with communication, rendering items unacceptable or inappropriate. In talking, mistakes occurred in pronunciation, intonation, lexis, subject-verb and gender concord. Teacher judgements varied on the extent to which a native speaker would tolerate different mistakes and combinations of them.

Throughout the year the assessment of writing continued to pose more problems for standardisation than did the assessment of talking. Various reasons can be suggested for this. Firstly, there is the fact that teachers on the whole are used to assessing writing even in the early stages, but are accustomed to applying the established criteria of grammatical and orthographic accuracy. In the EMREB syllabus the communicative criteria of acceptability and appropriacy apply to the written as well as the oral mode, so teachers are required to change completely the way they look at writing.

Secondly, it must be said that scenario-writing is, in fact, a non-communicative exercise, which was intended more as a learning activity than as a realistic assessment procedure. Pupils are required to repeat in writing what they have performed orally - the writing derives directly from the spoken exchange. For the report, however, they must communicate the information they have discovered about their partner to a reader. Report-writing is a communicative exercise, governed, therefore, by rules which go beyond a single-sentence grammar. Some degree of cohesion and coherence is to be expected, since the report is discourse written for a communicative purpose. Assessment of writing was rendered additionally complicated, therefore, by the difference in status between the scenario and the report.

The crux of the problem was establishing the viewpoint from which the assessor-as-native-speaker should examine the writing. Should the writing be comprehensible to a native speaker reading it as writing or should it be intelligible to a native speaker when read aloud by the original writer or by an enlightened reader? How sympathetic would a native speaker as reader be? Opinions on these questions affected the extent to which 'phonetic' or anglicised spellings were accepted. At the beginning of the year attitudes ranged from schools who wanted to accept nothing but fully accurate French in complete sentences to those who gave a mark to items such as these:

Tu a kalarge?
Non, je n'ai pada frère
Non, set on Anglatare

In the course of the year, however, a certain degree of compromise was attained, both through standardisation procedures and through in-service meetings. Most teachers seem satisfied now with the assessment of writing at Level One. It will be interesting to see what evolves at Level Two, where the writing activities are fully communicative (a letter or report on information obtained through participation in or observation of an exchange) and where the additional criterion of a degree of grammatical cohesion applies.

## CONCLUSION

The various types of data having been collected, it is now time to start analysing in full the extent to which the guidelines of the EMREB syllabus, and more specifically the communicative criteria of acceptability and appropriacy, have exerted a standardising influence on teaching and assessment practices. Communicative criteria include grammatical criteria but cannot, unlike the latter, be reduced to hard-and-fast rules. To give a simple example: 'J'ai anglais' would communicate a person's nationality effectively in answer to the question 'Tu es de quelle nationalité?', but could be misleading in a school context. This lack of precision can be disconcerting for teachers and obliges them to re-think their teaching and assessment strategies.

Samples of pupils' oral and written work have been put to native speakers, who have been asked to make judgements according to the communicative criteria, in order to investigate how closely the teachers' intuitions do, in fact, tally with native-speaker judgements. The native speakers have shown themselves to tolerate at least as much error as the teachers do when assessing their pupils. It is hoped that further native speakers will be consulted, since these investigations could be used to guide and inform teachers in their re-thinking of teaching and assessment criteria. Particularly for assessment purposes this guidance should prove valuable, since here the teachers are required to make judgements which are doubly subjective - they have to make the subjective decision that they think a native speaker would make in that situation.

The question of communicative criteria is clearly extremely complex. The criteria must be considered in relation to the systems elaborated by the pupils for foreign language acquisition, and also to their performance in communicative tasks and activities. These two areas are related to the teachers' teaching and assessment strategies respectively. By looking at the degree to which the communicative criteria of acceptability and appropriacy can be utilised as a means of standardisation, a fuller understanding should be reached of the criteria themselves.

## 3. EXPERIMENTING WITH INTERACTION

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I would like to begin by offering some words of explanation about my title 'Experimenting with interaction' so that you will interpret it in the sense I intend. The data I shall be referring to have been produced by second-year secondary school children from Leicestershire who are taking part in the East Midlands Graded Assessment Feasibility Study which I co-ordinate on behalf of the East Midland Regional Examinations Board (EMREB) in a project linking the Board, the University and the East Midlands LEAs. There are two levels of interaction involved: managerial and linguistic. By 'managerial interaction' I refer to the discussions we have with the teachers in the project: standardisation meetings, project administration meetings, in-service courses, private talks; the discussions teachers have amongst themselves - departmental and interdepartmental meetings; and the discussions the teachers have with the children about the work to be done. By 'linguistic interaction' I mean the interaction in French between teachers and taught, and between the children engaged in language learning.

I want first to relate modern language teaching in general to the communicative tendency in particular. Anyone familiar with modern language teaching in England will know that it is course-book based and exam-ridden. Most lessons are ex-cathedral in style: 'work' is writing; 'oral work' is teacher-dominated.

HMIs criticise schools for failing to teach their children to communicate and teachers for failing to use the language being taught as a means of communication in the classroom. In setting up the EMREB project, then, it seemed to me that if modern language teachers are to change, they have to engage critically in just those aspects of language learning and teaching they have (in the main) been content to leave to others. The keystone of the structure of the managerial interaction I spoke of is the co-operative elaboration of an assessment syllabus which sets out:

1. the learning objectives;
2. the functions and topics to be mastered;
3. the modes of assessment;
4. procedures for setting up communicative tasks; and
5. suggested language exponents.

The objective of this managerial interaction is to seek to ensure that teachers are not simply consumers of material produced by others. Unlike most graded objectives schemes, there are no tests; teachers have to learn how to construct tasks which can be seen to elicit the language functions which underlie the assessment objectives.

The teachers' problem in the classroom is how to move themselves and the pupils away from monolithic direction to a more flexible to-ing and fro-ing between different kinds of activity in which the teachers become presenters, managers, bit-players, field consultants and barefoot doctors - roles for which none of them has been trained, and for which - whisper it not in Gath - there are no trainers. The necessary interaction on which the project is predicated carries the implication, therefore, that in-service work on communicative language teaching can never be restricted to purely pragmatic issues (like making cue-cards or overhead transparencies). However helpful teachers find such discussions, they have to come to grips with theoretical problems which are not easy to grasp, and for which there are no reach-me-down solutions.

The principal problem is to focus learning on communication. Many teachers see this as a matter of content; of tacking on to the standard paradigm a few conversational items - often as learned dialogues of the 'survival' type; or as the introduction into the course of the 'role-play situations' which are now a prominent feature of CSE (and some GCE) examinations. I suspect that this may be equally true of much of what is termed communicative language teaching - the grafting on to the gnarled old trunk of a few new gesticulating limbs. I make this point not to separate out the EMREB project as different and superior - I have no evidence for comparison - but as a statement of the problem and a warning against facile solutions. The work we have done so far at Level One (first-year secondary) has produced children right across the ability range with a reasonable ability to ask for and give information about themselves in the topic areas laid down in the assessment syllabus.

In order to make the exchanges communicative, we have built in a degree of unpredictability at the paradigmatic level: the children may know, for example, that they will be asked their age, address, occupation, etc, but the information cued on the card from which the role-play is developed is fictional. Their exchanges are predictable in two senses:

- the kind of information to be transmitted has been the subject of the pre-assessment practice stage;

- the turntaking will be regularised in that whoever starts seeking information carries on until their questions are exhausted; at which point the roles are reversed.

The first kind of predictability is inevitable in criterion-referenced assessment and is offset - if it needs to be offset - by the increased reliability accruing from the shorter gap between learning and testing. But

the second - although I could perhaps have predicted it - was certainly not an intended outcome; and it was this element of the exchanges between the children that I wanted to modify with a view to reducing the predictability of the structure. And it is to these discourse problems that I now turn.

## DISCUSSION OF THE DATA

If we look at the linguistics of verbal interaction in the foreign language classroom, the focus on communication exposes the dichotomy between the sentence-grammar base of the teaching and the discourse-grammar base of the intended outcomes.

At sentence level, the learners can internalise rules which, whether they can formulate them or not, inform their practice, even allowing them to predict how to structure their meanings in contexts where their experience is no guide. At discourse level, however, they are likely to use native language strategies or to develop interlanguage features to plug communicative gaps.

For English learners of French the ethnography of speaking rules to be learned may not diverge as radically from the native behaviours as for, say, English learners of Japanese. But, whether the aspects of communicative interaction we wish to learn are culture and language specific or not, the problem remains the same for teacher and learner alike: there is no discourse grammar available; and - if there were - it would be unlikely to approach a standard sentence grammar in its accessibility.

For example, Un niveau-seuil (Coste and others 1976, 1981) attempts a catalogue of exponents of various speech acts but it offers no useful guide to their context of utterance - what Lyons terms 'All the factors which by virtue of their influence upon the participants in the language event systematically determine the form, the appropriateness, or the meaning of the utterances'.

## IN-SERVICE DISCUSSIONS

The purpose of our discussions with the teachers has been to focus on the framing of communicative tasks in the assessment syllabus which would stimulate increased linguistic interaction between the children. It is a main requirement of the syllabus that the talking is to some purpose. In the transmission of information - in Level Two about interests, attitudes and intentions in the topic areas of school and leisure interests - the children are asked to record the information gained and to report it later to the teacher in writing. In the transactions they have in the direction-seeking task to recapitulate the information received; and in the purchasing task to negotiate the purchase of specific goods. In the descriptive task they have to draw a picture from their partners' specifications (they have a photo or a cartoon stimulus). As you would expect, the purposive element in an assessment mediated by cue-cards tends to impose an adjacency pairing structure on the ensuing exchanges of a fairly simple kind.

Example:

Comment s'appelle ton prof?
M. Smith.

The pairing reveals the sentence grammar on which it is based so that the elided forms can be extrapolated: Mon prof s'appelle M. Smith. This basic pattern is undergoing some modification as a result of our attempts to encourage more flexible turntaking. I shall focus on the contiguous areas of:

(a) the exchange of personal meanings (albeit simulated)

(b) the emergent discourse features.

In the initial discussions with the teachers I suggested that, whilst maintaining the information-gap principle as the basis of our transmission activities, we might look to tasks which overloaded the listeners' channel capacity to process the data in review (thus stimulating the demand for repetition and clarification). I further suggested that in the transactions (buying) we might require the handling by the learner of a variety of options within a context of (predictable but unknown) constraints.

The cuing of information on cards inevitably focuses the children on establishing a semantic network to cover all the features required by the cue. Usually - given that the children understand that they are being encouraged to be flexible in their turntaking - the structure is of a chain of adjacency pairs: the information exchange takes place in parallel chunks. Once speakers have responded to a request for information in a topic area, they follow up with a similar request to their partner. This chaining is not, however, unvarying. The fact that they are operating with a semantic grid in mind (i.e. the framework of all the semantic options open to them) does not enforce a rigid adherence to whatever topic order seems suggested by the layout of the cue-card. As in this example (an exchange about interests in school):

A1: Tu es forte dans la musique?
B1: Oui, j'ai assez fort.
A2: Ah.
B2: Er, comment s'appelle ton prof de la musi/dessin?
A3: Mlle Ros. Et toi?
B3: Mlle Lavisse ..... Tu es fort en dessin?

(Incidentally the teacher had cued a boy-girl exchange between two girls - a fact which she later regretted .....)

I shall refer to this sequence again later, but here I would point out how the delaying by B of the option opened by A creates a discourse problem. It is evident from the recordings that the children normally attempt flexibility in exchange by tacking on questions (not necessarily et toi?) to the answers given. Here B's response to A's 'Mlle Lavisse' closes the frame. The speaker

then needs a formula to re-introduce the topic or to re-focus one not concluded, e.g. A propos/pendant que j'y pense. The learners cope - as here - by pausing and re-opening the topic.

There are three strategies open to the teacher in the discourse area:

1. to predict these needs and deal appropriately with the relevant language beforehand;

2. to be on hand when the language forms are needed;

3. to expect a subsequent recall by the learners of what they would have liked to be able to say, but couldn't.

In the main, where the children feel a need to say what they don't know how to express, they draw heavily on their stock of L1 signals (with or without gestures). Examples:

Tu t'appelles comment?
Je m'appelle Jean-Paul.
Ah .... et toi?
Je m'appelle Marie.
Ah.

or

Tu aimes le dessin?
Oui.
Hmm.

or

Tu as quelles matières aujourd'hui?
Er .... maths ....

Such signals occur in the interstices of the exchanges. In the recordings they are more frequent in the child-to-child than child-to-teacher exchanges. Whether this is because of the inferior/superior dimension or because the teacher-child exchanges are transactional is not clear.

Two factors influence the discourse:

- the information is cued and therefore the cue-card has to be scanned before information can be given

- the information gained has to be recorded in note form.

Where, under the influence of either of these features, information is sought which goes beyond the partner's capacity or wish to respond in a time limit imagined to be acceptable to the other, then other strategies are used.

1. Foregrounding

This strategy enables the speaker to highlight the information requested by placing it at the beginning of the utterance so that time can be created for it to be handled appropriately:

A: On a maths avec qui?
B: Maths, maths .... avec M. Legros.

or

A: Pardon, madame, pour aller à la boulangerie, s'il vous plaît?
B: La boulangerie? .... er .... prenez ....

This particular discourse feature is probably a reduced form of what was presented by the teacher as an interactive item:

A: Pour aller à la poste, s'il vous plaît ....
B: Eh bien/voyons/la poste ....

The children find their way to it quite naturally since most have learned at an earlier stage the foregrounded question form of the type:

Le français, tu aimes ça?

2. Repetitions

These are often vocalisations signalling that a turn is still in progress and may not be interrupted. They therefore function as a holding-off device whilst the data are scanned.

A: Tu as quelles matières aujourd'hui?
B: Er maths, maths, .... l'anglais.

They also of course serve the double purpose of informing the writing and of holding up any further exchange:

A1: On a géo à quelle heure?
B: Onze heures et demie.
A2 repeats/writes: Onze heures et demie.

3. Interjections

These are usually learned formulae, often overgeneralised and used inappropriately, as in the case of the boy who can't recall all the detailed directions he is supposed to repeat. He simply says to his partner, role-playing a stranger in the formal style:

Tu répètes.

But these interjections can be used to vary the repetitive strategy:

A: Tu as quelles matières aujourd'hui?
B: Maths, maths, l'anglais .... un moment .... sciences et français.

Sometimes they can signal that the listener is not ready to attend (usually because he is writing notes):

A: Tu es fort en l'anglais?
B: Un moment .... Pardon?
A1: Tu es fort en anglais?
B1: J'ai assez fort.

There is finally an example of the creation of a discourse gap. The speaker wishes to acknowledge the message but express a different view:

A: (on a maths) avec M. Legros.
B: Ah, merci.
A1: M. Legros .... je déteste M. Legros.
B1: Ah, oui (on a falling tone) .... j'adore M. Legros.

DEFICIENCIES

There is, of course, ample evidence in the exchanges of deficiency in the communicative strategies adopted. It is rare for the children to both perceive and repair the damage.

An instance of this is evidenced in a passage quoted already:

A1: Tu es forte dans la musique?
B1: Oui, j'ai assez fort.
A2: Ah.
B2: Er, comment s'appelle ton prof de la musi/dessin?
A3: Mlle Ros. Et toi?
B3: Mlle Lavisse .... Tu es fort en dessin?

Here the adjacency pairing of the surface structure does not realise appropriately the underlying semantic structure of the exchange: the subjacent sentence grammer of A3 and B3 does not have its expected extrapolation:

A3 (Mlle Ros) answers B2 but the added 'Et toi?' does not stand for the parallel to B2 'comment s'appelle ton prof de dessin?' But 'comment s'appelle ton prof de musique?'

This is quite clear from a later amplification:

A1: Tu aimes Mlle Ros?
B: Oui, j'ai aime Mlle Ros. Et toi?
A2: Hmm oui, j'ai aime Mlle Lavisse.

There is an example of a girl becoming aware that her partner cannot respond appropriately to the question put:

A: Tu aimes ton professeur de sciences?
B: Monsieur Smith.

She cannot (or does not) repair the damage but presses on with a change of topic:

Tu aimes le maths?

Later she gets a similar response in reply to a question like A1, so at her third attempt she changes tack, saying: 'Tu aimes ... comment s'appelle ton professeur de français?' and gets in response: 'Madame Smith'.

The change seems to show sensitivity to her partner's deficiencies rather than pure tact in the presence of the teacher.

Another example of the absence of explication in the event of a failure in communication occurs where two boys are playing the shop assistant and customer roles. (In the assessment the assistant role is played by the teacher.) The following exchange takes place:

A1: Je voudrais un porte-clés.
B1: Oui.
A2: Qu'est-ce que vous avez comme couleurs?
B2: Bleu, vert, brun, et rouge.
A3: Bon.
B3: Oui, c'est tout?
A4: C'est tout ....

Presumably the shopkeeper identifies bon as a colour and that was what was intended.

Where the children do repair deficiencies in the exchanges they are usually stylistic - a repair made to their own language without intervention from the teacher.

A1: Le français, c'est où ça?
B1: C'est au sept.
A2: Salle sept?
B2: Oui.

This then becomes the adopted mode:

A1: L'histoire, c'est où ça?
B1: Salle deux.

There is a nice example of self-adjustment during an exchange of directions to various points. In three successive practices one child produced:

1. Vous tournez la première rue à gauche.
2. Vous tournez la .... vous tournez à gauche .... c'est la troisième rue à gauche. (This was recapped by his partner as: je prends la troisième à gauche.)

His final version ran:

3. .... prenez la deuxième rue à gauche.

Where there are attempts at repairs to the semantic fabric, they come in the main in the direction-giving activities. This is not surprising since many children have problems with right and left and the appropriate selection of the correct item of a minimal pair in L2 is often difficult. It is in this area that the children correct themselves and their partners:

Self-correction:

Vous tournez la première rue à gauche, à droite, pardon, à droite. C'est à gauche.

Correction of partner:

.... C'est à gauche (recap)
Non, c'est à droite.
C'est à droite (recap)

The storing of gauche/droit in close proximity is therefore not always a disadvantage. And it is interesting to note in this connection how well the children can negotiate in transactions where the options open to them are structured with a similar degree of paradigmatic regularity. The following is a shopping scene in which the teacher plays the shopkeeper.

A1: Je voudrais un cendrier, s'il vous plaît.
B1: Un cendrier, oui, voilà les cendriers. Oui, 20 fr, 25 fr. Lequel préférez-vous?
A2: Je prends le 25 fr, s'il vous plaît.

or:

A1: Je voudrais une glace à la fraise, s'il vous plaît.
B1: Ah, je regrette, mademoiselle, je n'ai pas de glaces à la fraise. Mais j'ai vanille, chocolat, citron et pistache.
A2: Hmm .... je voudrais une à la pistache, s'il vous plaît.

or even:

A1: .... je voudrais un porte-clés à 13 fr, s'il vous plaît.
B1: A 13 fr, oui. Qu'est-ce que vous préférez comme couleur?
A2: Qu'est-ce que vous avez comme couleurs?
B2: Euh bleu, jaune, vert et noir.
A3: Je voudrais un porte-clés bleu, s'il vous plaît.

Apart from the tight grip on the paradigmatic framework, you will notice the example of an embedded 'side-sequence' (to use Jefferson's term) which follows a question with a question, holding off an answer to the first question until more information has been supplied.

The second-year children we videorecorded show some evidence of an approach towards mastery of interactive strategies. If, however, we are to aim at communicative competence in Loveday's sense of 'an active process of cultural symbolisation', then, given the complexity of the task and the poverty of our resources, it will, like the impossible, take a little longer.

## 4. THE EVALUATION OF A 'COMMUNICATIVE' FRENCH COURSE

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Tour de France, designed for the first two or three years of French (age 12-14 in Scotland, 11-14 in England), is one of several recent school foreign language courses claiming to embody 'communicative' ideas, but is unique among these in that the Commercial Version now generally available (Scottish Central Committee for Modern Languages 1981-82) was preceded by a Pilot Version (Scottish Central Committee for Modern Languages 1979-81) tried out over a two-year period in 43 schools throughout Scotland, and subject to an extensive evaluation involving one full-time and several part-time researchers for three-and-a-half years.

The evaluation was funded by the Scottish Education Department and based at the Department of Education, University of Stirling. It was divided into a 'Formative Evaluation' intended to help the course writers (a Working Party of the Scottish Central Committee on Modern Languages) in the process of revision, and an 'Independent Evaluation' leading to a report on the course (Parkinson and others 1982) aimed at a variety of audiences, including the funding body, potential users of the course and the wider foreign language teaching community.

This paper concentrates on the Independent Evaluation, which had the following components:

(i) A 'critical study' of the materials supplied to teachers, examining the linguistic assumptions underlying the ideas in the theoretical documents (see below), the clarity, consistency and defensibility of these ideas, and the extent to which the rest of the course materials (pupil's book, activity sheets, filmstrip, tape, flashcards, tests, detailed teaching notes for individual sections) either supported these ideas, or conflicted with them, or were neutral with respect to their implementation.

(ii) A programme of questionnaires and interviews involving all Pilot Version teachers and examining their understanding of and attitudes to the Working Party's ideas.

(iii) The observation and analysis of a large corpus of Tour de France lessons. This entailed, inter alia, the use of a systematic coding instrument based on that described in Mitchell and others (1981), but modified to reflect the distinctive concerns of the course writers.

(iv) A programme of tests and essays, administered in the final weeks of the course, assessing not only pupils' proficency and achievement in

French, but also their attitudes to French language and culture, to French as a school subject and related matters. This part of the research is described in Parkinson (in press).

It should be stressed that the evaluation was not concerned solely with communication, and the report also deals extensively with other issues, notably mastery learning (see also Parkinson 1980, Parkinson and others 1981). The principle followed was that the course should be evaluated in terms of its own declared aims and areas of concern, the most complete statement of these being found in two theoretical documents presented to teachers before the start of the pilot course (Johnstone, 1979a, 1979b). In practice, however, 'communication' in its various forms was by far the most important construct in these documents, and hence in the evaluation.

A weakness of the documents is that they nowhere define communication; we are told 'what communication need not imply' but not what it does imply. The writer does make a three-way distinction between 'practice of linguistic form', 'practice of communication' and 'language used for real communication' (Johnstone, 1979b, p 11), but more useful for evaluation purposes are the eight 'principles of communicative language use in class' which the writer then offers. I will now examine these principles one by one, drawing in each case on the relevant findings of parts (i) and (iii) of the Independent Evaluation - that is, how clear, coherent and defensible is the principle, in what ways was it operationalised (or not) in the Pilot Version materials, and in what ways was it implemented (or not) in the observed lessons? All summary runs the risk of distortion, and readers are referred to Parkinson and others (1982) for a fuller treatment.

Principle 1. 'French as the main/only language of everyday classroom management' (p 13-15)

The writer suggests that it is normal in schools for some classroom language to be taught near the start of the course, but that this is just a token gesture which tends to be forgotten by the second year. The Tour de France answer is claimed to be:

> ' ... to fit regular sections on 'French for classroom management' into the course; regularly to devise activities demanding the use of this kind of language; to consider it as one of the foundation stones of the learner's French syllabus; and to build it formally into our pattern of diagnostic and attainment tests.
> ... We shall be teaching the French for 'I've finished Activity Sheet 6. Can I please start Number 7?' and 'I'm ready to take my Diagnostic Speaking Test now.' (p 19)

This insistence on the importance of management in French is fully justified; requests and statements such as the two quoted are the nearest classroom equivalent to real-world language use, and if regularly spoken and responded to in French should give some confidence in using French for real-life tasks, whether or not these involve similar structures.

The course did indeed provide many classroom management phrases, initially in the teacher's notes, but the first list for direct pupil consumption appeared only in the third 'topic' of the second 'theme', a point not reached by many classes until a year or more of French had elapsed. Furthermore, the provision of English titles, instructions and explanations in taped and in written materials hardly encouraged extensive non-practice foreign language use.

In about 60% of observed lessons, management French was, in fact, found to be fairly limited, scarcely extending beyond 'Bonjour' and 'Au revoir'. Some of these classes were seen to practise solemnly the French for 'Put your activity sheets in your folders' etc, but the teacher used English when the said event actually occurred.

In about 30% of lessons, however, management French did reach the 'moderate' level, being used for all or nearly all focusing and framing moves and simple instructions, and to a substantial degree for complex instructions. Still more extensive management French was noted in the remaining 10% of lessons, all the observed lessons of two teachers in a single school, but both these teachers still used L1 for detailed explanations.

Principle 2. 'Personalisation' (p 15-16)

This involves equipping the pupils to talk about themselves, including their 'name, age, address, hobbies, likes and dislikes, friends and relatives, classmates, teachers, ... past history, present situation, future intentions...'. An implication is said to be that the language syllabus of each pupil will be different. Tour de France tries to provide for this by including quite a lot of personalised language in the course, 'too much in fact for any one pupil', so that individuals draw from it that which applies to themselves, but the teacher will still be called upon to supplement this, e.g. to deal with pupils whose relatives have unusual occupations.

The communicative justification for this principle seems twofold. First, the substantive language used may be of value in real-life situations, although the extent to which people meeting foreigners do talk about their sister's employment can be exaggerated. Second, and more important, if pupils (and teacher?) talk about their own hobbies etc, there may be more interest from speaker and listener in the informational content than would otherwise be the case. The pilot materials did by and large operationalise the first part of this principle, and in observed teaching brothers, sisters, pets and school subjects, liked and hated, bulked fairly large, 'personal information' topic segments accounting for 8.2% of teaching time.

Individualisation of syllabus, however, was only perfunctory: the given materials enabled pupils to say that they had two or three brothers, liked or hated French, but provided no optional vocabulary beyond the basic syllabus. The teachers themselves rarely supplemented to any great extent,

and quite often even insisted on all pupils saying, for example, that they had a cat and a dog and preferred dancing.

Principle 3. 'Contextualisation' (p 16-20)

In some cases, we are told, it will not be appropriate for the learner to 'speak as himself'. In this event the teacher is supposed to make explicit 'the WHO, the TO WHOM, the WHERE, the WHEN and the WHY in each foreign language activity'. (p 16-17)

An exercise in which pupils play two French course characters offering and refusing fruit ('Une pomme, Monique?' 'Non, merci') is contrasted favourably with a non-contextualised practice exercise ('Qu'est-ce que c'est?' 'C'est une pomme.') Most people would probably agree that the 'offering and refusing' exercise is the better, and, as the writer says, this has to do with its relevance to communicative function. But the case for full contextualisation as defined above has not been proven. Would the exercise be less good if it were just 'a boy' and 'his sister' in the dialogue? Would it be less good if we did not know that they were 'on the last course of their meal at home'? Is there any reason why the pupils should play Thierry and Monique rather than simulate themselves in a future situation with a French friend?

The problem is compounded in those situations where the context does not narrowly determine the language. If the housewives in the launderette are talking about Sartre, is the specification of identity, place and time still equally important? Or should such situations be avoided, with the consequence that language is implicitly taught as a highly context-bound phenomenon, denying one of the most important of Hockett's 'design features'?

The issue is clarified somewhat by further reading of Principle 3, when we find a distinction between 'directed role-play', where pupils are narrowly constrained as to the language they should produce, and 'simulation', in which pupils are given the outline of a situation and encouraged to construct a dialogue of their own. One can readily see that a fairly full context specification may be appropriate for activities of the latter type, and that such activities may have communicative significance.

Turning to the materials provided, we find once again a 'half-way' operationalisation: most of the indicated activities did go beyond mere practice of form, as there was some indication of participants, setting and purpose, but they were 'directed role-play' rather than 'simulation', with very little open-endedness. Lesson observation yielded a similar picture: learners were using phrases of possible communicative usefulness, but were not behaving in a communicative way. 34.9% of the discourse was found to be 'non-contextualised' or 'fragmented' in topic, far more than in the earlier observed lessons with an 'old-fashioned' course (Mitchell and others 1981).

Principle 4. 'Communicative Function' (p 20-22)

The writer claims that the Tour de France language syllabus has 'a wide selection of communicative functions in many different settings'. The value of this is said to be threefold:

(i) 'It gives learners a clear sense of purpose and direction ... An intellectual exercise becomes a practical task ...'

(ii) 'It sensitises learners to subtleties of language use in different social settings' (e.g. how to say 'Shut the door!' with varying degrees of politeness).

(iii) 'It helps liberate learners from the imprisonment of a situational paradigm ... Whatever the situation, known or unknown, the ability to perform communicative functions will allow the learner to communicate something at least ...'.

The evaluation team felt it was by no means clear that such outcomes could necessarily be expected either from functionally organised syllabi in general, or from that actually generated by inspection of the Pilot Version. The latter syllabus was found to be for the most part not functionally organised: it did not usually bring together structurally heterogeneous realisations of the same function, nor items following the 'Shut the door!' model above. It was in fact a mainly structural syllabus, in the presentation and practice of which functional principles were invoked. Such an approach is entirely defensible, but rather at odds with the course writers' rhetoric.

Principle 5 (a) 'Initiation as well as response'

Principle 5 (b) 'Pupil-pupil interaction as well as teacher-pupil interaction' (p 22-26)

It is pointed out that most pupil utterances in conventional foreign language classrooms are a response to cues provided by teacher and course materials. Tour de France aims to change this pattern, encouraging pupils to make unprompted utterances in class, and to work on oral activities in pairs. The second part of this (Principle 5 (b)) was perhaps the most successful of Tour de France innovations. It was clearly conceptualised and fully supported by the materials, which included scores of 'activity sheets' prompting pupils to engage in dialogues. Although it represented a major departure from established patterns of teaching in Scottish foreign language classes, this oral paired work was warmly received by nearly all teachers, and prominent in observed lessons. Although such work was initiatory to only a limited extent, pupil utterances often being quite narrowly constrained responses to the materials, the importance of the change in discourse patterns should not be minimised.

In whole-class work, pupil initiation did not become an accepted norm, and even syllabus phrases such as 'Est-ce que je peux distribuer les images?'

normally followed a teacher solicitation ('Qui veut distribuer les images?'). More democratic turn-taking was usually frowned upon by teachers, for example:

P. Miss, have you ever been to France?
T. That doesn't concern me at present.

Principle 6. 'Provision of authentic, relatively unstructured language' (p 27-29)

'Real life, out-of-school foreign language', we are told, is very unlike that often heard in the classroom, containing 'interruptions, affective exclamations, false starts, hesitations, pauses, repetitions, paraphrases, stabilisers', and a 'communicative approach' must 'provide a great deal of the sort of language that actually happens in real life in the foreign country'. This is not intended to replace 'structured' (i.e. simplified, artificial) language, but to supplement it, for otherwise 'the learner's syllabus would be lacking in certain features of authentic language use'. In concrete terms this is to be done by having two versions of the tape-filmstrip language presentations, a 'pruned version' where new teaching points 'stand out clearly', and an 'extended version' in which 'these teaching points are still there, but this time embedded in a more authentic language context'.

As the last quotation makes clear, the language presentations in Tour de France were not authentic in the normally accepted sense, i.e. texts written or spoken by natives for purposes other than language teaching. Instead, they were composed texts, with a sprinkling of 'Eh bien', 'Vous voyez', etc, intended to make them more natural. The only authentic language as we understand it in the Pilot Version was found on a few advanced activity sheets, which reproduced pages from tourist brochures etc. No guidance was given on how to use these, and teachers observed or interviewed at this stage in the course simply left them out.

Principle 7. 'Comprehension exceeds production' (p 29-32)

The problem addressed is that of the learner in a real foreign language situation who expresses a request in simple foreign language and is then 'taken aback by the reply given in what seems to be a torrent of incomprehensible sound and gesture'. As the author remarks, an appropriate instructional programme preparing learners for this situation would require pupils to develop strategies for coping, and these would include learning to 'recognise the known amid the unknown', to 'make intelligent guesses', and 'techniques of intervention, so as to interrupt the fluent speaker ... asking him to speak more slowly or clearly or simply or loudly (or all of these!)' (p 30).

Three reservations must be expressed about the operationalisation of this principle. The first is that the suggested procedures are not to any great extent interactive; they involve listening to songs, poems, anecdotes, jokes,

news items, etc, which is an important type of language activity, but obviously different from the 'response to request for information' situation discussed above, and therefore not offering practice directly relevant to such a situation.

The second reservation is that the teacher may be encouraged to treat gist-extraction in an insufficiently rigorous way. He is to provide the songs, news items, etc, and of the latter it is said: 'Information like this is almost 'throw-away' material on a take-it-or-leave-it basis' (p 31). Whilst the author is right to insist that not all material should be drilled, regurgitated, etc, and whilst purely 'throw-away' comprehension material may indeed have its place, there is no mention of a third possibility, namely that of checking on comprehension in a way which requires only gist-extraction but is nevertheless rigorous within such limitations.

The third reservation is that the onus is quite explicitly on the teacher to provide most of the material. The claim is that it is likely to be more effective if, for example, a song used in class 'is clearly one that appeals to the teacher too and indeed has been specially chosen by him' (p 31). An attractive idea, but one may well feel that teachers would need more support than this for extended comprehension work to become widespread.

In the pilot course, almost all foreign language material seemed to be for intensive practice, and the emphasis was on thoroughly learning a few basic structures rather than on developing techniques of gist-extraction etc. On the 'vocabulary-grammar pages', no items were marked for comprehension only, although certain additional vocabulary lists supplied with 'advanced' activity sheets may have been intended to have this status for some pupils.

Lesson observation revealed, predictably, that teachers were not, in fact, supplementing the course with comprehension material, and that a pattern of intensive practice was normal. Moreover, the activity sheets were sometimes seen to work <u>against</u> comprehension skills in a way which we had not fully anticipated: as both partners had the same sheet, it was often unnecessary to listen to the question while preparing one's answer, and so speaking was practised more than listening. This observation was paralleled by the test results: speaking competence was generally reasonable, but comprehension was <u>relatively</u> poorer than might have been expected.

<u>Principle 8</u>. 'Tolerance of certain kinds of error made in autonomous language use' (p 32-35)

The author suggests that the successful transmission of a 'basic message', even if structural errors are made, should be a criterion for correctness. In itself, this idea is hardly likely to be new to its recipients, but the important innovation is that the basic-message criterion is to be the main one used in the diagnostic tests on which the course's mastery-learning strategy depends.

Such tests and marking schemes were indeed found in the course materials, were generally used by teachers, and seem to have been a conspicuous

success, with most pupils able, at the first or subsequent attempt, to attain the realistic basic-message targets, and a consequent pattern of high scores and high pupil motivation, at least in the early stages. Problems arose, however, because the attainment tests used for certification purposes (and not allowing pupils a second chance) invoked different criteria, with less emphasis on basic communication and more on formal correctness. The justification for this change remains unclear.

## OVERALL CONCLUSIONS ON THE COURSE

In the historical section of the evaluation report, we suggest that the setting up of the Working Party to plan the Tour de France course was motivated primarily by a strongly felt practical need for materials which French teachers could use to enable them to cope in a more rewarding way with the whole range of pupils in the 12-14 age-group; but that there was also another level at which the planning of Tour de France could be properly understood, and that at this level the primary concern was with the development and implementation of innovative foreign language teaching ideas. Accordingly the course could be evaluated either in terms of how far it met the need that it was commissioned to meet, or in terms of how far it led to a realisation of the ideas that it was developed to realise.

From the first perspective, our conclusions were overwhelmingly favourable. With few exceptions, the course materials were judged by teachers to be appropriate in content and presentation and to be convenient for classroom use. They found many of the suggested activities to be well suited to classroom conditions and to their own skills, and some of these activities - notably pupils working in pairs - to be new, manageable and valuable. Teachers' impressions that pupils tended to find the course interesting and satisfying appeared to be fully justified by the comments made by pupils themselves in essays. And the evidence seemed very clear not only that virtually all pupils were enabled to communicate to some degree in spoken French, but also that the majority of them found this achievement to be very rewarding and motivating. All in all, the Pilot Version of the course was sufficiently well matched to the abilities and concerns of the teachers and pupils who used it for it to be judged as meeting very well the felt need which led to its production.

From the second perspective, though, the Pilot Version course was less successful, as many of its ideas were not carried out to any great extent in observed teaching. In part, this had to do with the failure to provide supporting material, and we may expect a different pattern in classes using the Commercial Version, which has, for example, more listening comprehension material. In part, the problem lay with the unclear exposition and thinking through of the ideas, and the extent of change here remains uncertain, for the 'course rationale' which has been promised to replace Johnstone (1979a and 1979b) has, at the time of writing, not yet appeared. Beyond this, however, there seem to be fundamental problems in the implementation of innovation (see e.g. Brown and others 1976) which the course writers have not addressed, and which a course alone cannot be

expected to solve; for radical changes, such as the extensive use of the foreign language in the classroom, something more than a new course is needed. As the course writers acknowledge, extensive in-service training is one requirement, and multi-media packages (e.g. Stirling 1981) can make a significant contribution.

But it would be foolish to think of in-service training as a panacea which will lead teachers to implement all Tour de France ideas. For one thing, training in new skills is only likely to be fruitful once these skills have been identified and analysed; and we are only now beginning to acquire, for example, some knowledge of the skills which teachers require to be able to develop and maintain stable patterns of classroom communication in the foreign language.

More fundamentally, to expect teachers to adopt new patterns because these are authoritatively recommended and because training is available is to do less than justice to teachers' confidence in their own expertise or to their seriousness in taking such decisions. That the proposed innovations would lead to the intended consequences is never certain; even if these consequences were realised, their merits may still be contested; and even if these merits are accepted, they may not be seen as sufficient to justify the effort which the proposed new patterns could involve. It is important to note that extra effort is in many cases required not simply in order to make the change but because the proposed new pattern is inherently more complex and demanding. All things considered, we suspect that even with the support of substantial in-service training programmes, the innovative ideas of the course will be very unevenly implemented by teachers. Some of these ideas, especially in the area of differentiation, are likely to be judged in many school situations to be unrealistic as they stand. For others, a great deal of work by teacher educators, advisers and teachers themselves in co-operative groups will be needed if ideas are to be fully understood, internalised and put into practice. We suspect, however, that rather than committing themselves wholeheartedly to these ideas, most teachers will want to use them, together with their established practices, as part of a continuing exploration of the problems and possibilities of teaching French at this level. And it would be in support of such thought and experimentation that in-service programmes could in our opinion most appropriately be planned.

Whilst teachers simply using Tour de France 'off the shelf' without preparation are unlikely to put into full effect most of the ideas underlying the course, they are unlikely to meet with disaster and may well find the course very satisfactory. The only circumstance in which adoption of Tour de France is likely to be disastrous is if it is treated as a ready-made, teacher-proof package guaranteeing successful language teaching, as an end rather than a beginning. We hope that our report will help in the making of decisions on whether and when to adopt the course and on appropriate support provision, and will encourage the constructively critical, thoughtful and creative use of Tour de France.

# 5. THE TEACHER'S USE OF FIRST LANGUAGE AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE AS MEANS OF COMMUNICATION IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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## INTRODUCTION

The current movement for the renewal of foreign language teaching within the British school system stems in large part from a redefinition of the objectives of foreign language teaching in terms of the development of learners' communicative competence in the target language(s) (Harding, Page and Rowell 1980). This has led not only to widespread attempts to reconceptualise foreign language syllabuses in functional-notional terms, but also to efforts to renew the methodology of language teaching, most notably by building experience of foreign language use for communicative purposes more extensively and systematically into the learning process (Clark 1981; Dunning 1982).

Methodologists argue for such a 'communicative approach' on varied grounds. It is claimed that communicative use of the foreign language is a more motivating experience than drilling and rehearsal of linguistic form; that communicative use of the foreign language resembles more closely the type of language experience for which learners are eventually to be prepared; and perhaps most tellingly, that such experience provides the form of linguistic input best adopted to the operation of unconscious acquisition processes, which are seen as perhaps of greater importance for the development of foreign language competence than conscious learning processes (Littlewood 1981; Mitchell and Johnstone 1981).

However well-founded such arguments may be, the provision of communicative foreign language experience presents peculiar difficulties for those concerned with foreign language instruction within the British school system. Most British adolescents have no routine contact with speech communities using the most commonly taught languages; many have never even met a native speaker of French or German. While many schools put considerable effort into promoting exchange visits, penfriend schemes, etc, such contacts are highly episodic; neither they nor the services of the increasingly scarce foreign language assistant can be relied on to provide the majority of pupils with any substantial language contact. If pupils are to gain any substantial experience of the target language being used for 'real' communicative purposes, therefore, it must be within the 'normal' classroom framework; and the only fluent speaker of the target language with whom they are likely to be in any regular contact is their own class teacher. Peculiar obstacles seem likely to lie in the path of communicative foreign language use in the British classroom however. The ratio of fluent speakers to learners is that of one to many; more importantly, teacher and pupils

typically share English as their first language (and even where they do not, all are likely to be fluent English speakers). Thus (unlike the situation in many EFL classrooms, where the target language is often the only available means of communication between teacher and pupils), the target language is an optional means of communication, constantly in competition with the shared native language. The ever present availability of an efficient means for fulfilling the many immediate communicative needs involved in managing the language classroom is a powerful factor militating against adoption of the target language, so inefficient for accomplishing these short-term purposes, as the communicative norm.

To propose to British foreign language teachers, therefore, that they should systematically develop the use of the target language as a substantive means of communication with their pupils is not unproblematic; previous methodological initiatives in a similar direction (most notably the 'direct method' school) are known to have had only a marginal impact in the British classroom. Are current attempts to develop the 'communicative approach' likely to prove any more successful?

The Communicative Interaction Research Project, based at Stirling University and funded by the Scottish Education Department, has as its principal objective an investigation of the feasibility of developing communicative foreign language use in the British classrooms, and the identification of possible 'costs' and constraints attaching to the adoption of a 'communicative' methodology. From among the by now quite considerable numbers of teachers involved with several developmental projects operating in Scottish secondary schools and sharing a commitment to the development of a 'communicative' approach, a smaller group of teachers of French was identified, who agreed to an extensive programme of observation and audio-recording of their work with first- and second-year classes. (In Scotland all children follow a common course for the first two years of secondary schooling, which includes compulsory study of one foreign language, usually French.)

Fourteen teachers were involved in this work during 1981-82. They were working in four different schools in Central Scotland, and using one or other of three currently popular beginners' French courses (Tour de France, Eclair and Tricolore). Two visits, each lasting a fortnight, were paid to each of the four schools during this period. During the first group of these visits each participating teacher was observed throughout the fortnight working with one or two classes at first- or second-year level. A total of 122 lessons were observed during these visits, or an average of almost nine lessons per teacher; extensive notes were taken on each lesson, and a proportion were audio-recorded. The teachers were interviewed at some length concerning the observed pattern of teaching, but at this stage the researchers made no 'interventionist' proposals. The activities seen thus constituted the teachers' interpretation of the 'communicative' approach. During the second group of visits (to the same classrooms) a different research strategy was adopted. Instead of generalised observation, specific types of teaching activity, identified on the first round of visits as likely to promote 'communicative'

foreign language use, were made the object of small-scale action research studies.

This paper draws mainly on a preliminary analysis of the teaching observed on the first round of observational visits, in order to give an account of the extent to which this atypically 'committed' group of teachers found it possible to use the target language as a means of communication with their beginners' classes, in the course of more or less routine teaching. Some reference is also made to certain of the action research studies, which will be reported on more fully elsewhere.

## A DEFINITION OF 'COMMUNICATIVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE USE'

In our analysis of the language of these foreign language classrooms we have been concerned to distinguish primarily 'communicative' uses of the target language from 'practice' or rehearsal uses (it has been assumed that the L1 was always used for message-oriented communicative purposes). For this purpose the following definition of 'communicative' foreign language (FL) use was developed:

> 'Any instance of FL use, productive or receptive, will be considered 'communicative' if it appears that the people involved in producing/attending to the discourse have another purpose/intention additional to the general purpose of modelling/practising/displaying competence in formal aspects of the target FL.'

This definition recognises that almost any conceivable use of the target foreign language in the British classroom, between teachers and pupils who share a native language, will have an inescapable, general practice function, to familiarise the pupils with the forms of the target language (if the participants merely wished to communicate effectively with one another, they would do so in English). It restricts the term 'communicative' to that subset of foreign language utterances for which some additional purpose can be detected. The definition is neutral as to the nature of that purpose, which may be informational, instrumental, phatic, etc; it is also neutral as to the linguistic channel being used (communicative foreign language use may involve any or all of listening, speaking, reading, writing), and as to the length of any instance of foreign language use which may be considered 'communicative'. One-word utterances may be considered to be instances of foreign language use, as may entire teaching episodes.

The operationalisation of such a definition presents problems, given its dependence on the interpretation of the subjective intentions of participants, which can never be directly accessible to an observer. When the teacher says 'Bonjour', is she greeting the class, or modelling how to greet? Contextual information, linguistic and non-linguistic, may provide more or less convincing evidence regarding the nature of the participants' intentions. Clues such as the predictability or otherwise of utterances, the 'newness' of information conveyed, the types of responses expected and accepted, and the nature of teachers' evaluative comments, will often mark

instances of foreign language use as primarily 'practice' or 'communicative' in purpose, and demonstrate the existence of a consensus regarding their purpose between speakers and hearers, teacher and pupils. Indeed the 'rules' for what constitutes appropriate interaction at particular moments are made more explicit in classroom discourse than in almost any other kind of talk (Sinclair and Brazil 1982). However, the intentions of participants may at times remain ambiguous to the observer and perhaps even to other participants in a given teaching episode. Thus in the lesson recordings made for the Communicative Interaction Project occasional instances may be found of apparent misunderstandings between teacher and pupils. The following example is drawn from a second-year lesson:

(Teacher has been drilling 3rd p pl verb forms, using flashcards)

| | |
|---|---|
| T | Qu'est-ce qu'elles font? |
| P1 | Elles marchent dans l'eau |
| T | Elles marchent dans l'eau. Tu marches dans l'eau, quelquefois?... Pendant les vacances, during the holidays? |
| P2 | Oui, elle marche dans l'eau |
| T | Toi tu marches dans l'eau? |
| P3 | Oui, j'aime marcher - |
| T | 'J'aime marcher', possibly, mm mm |
| P4 | Oui, je marche dans l'eau |
| T | Oui, je marche dans l'eau, oui, je marche dans l'eau. 'Tu marches?' 'Oui, je - '. 'Ils marchent?' 'Oui, ils marchent'. |

In this lesson extract pupils 3 and 4 appear to have interpreted differently the intentions of the teacher - P3 interpreting the teacher's question as a message-oriented enquiry (a 'communicative' utterance), P4 interpreting it as a stimulus intended to elicit production of a particular sentence structure (and it is this latter interpretation which seems to be confirmed in the teacher's evaluative responses).

Nonetheless, in spite of the occasional occurrence of such apparent mismatches, when pupils attempt to respond 'for real' to the practice initiatives of their teacher (and vice versa), teachers normally make their expectations for any given teaching episode sufficiently explicit for an observer to decide whether or not they intend it to have a 'communicative' dimension. The following analysis is thus based on the observer's interpretation of the teachers' moment-to-moment intentions for the type of language experience being given to their pupils.

## COMMUNICATIVE FOREIGN LANGUAGE (CFL) ACTIVITIES

During the non-interventionist, observational visits to their classrooms the fourteen teachers involved in the Communicative Interaction Project typically structured their lessons to include several distinct teaching activities (or lesson 'segments': Mitchell and others 1981). All the teachers ran activities of three basic linguistic types: English-medium activities (which were assumed always to have a communicative purpose), practice

foreign language activities (i.e. those with no discernible purpose other than the rehearsal of language forms) and communicative foreign language activities. These activities occurred in varying proportions in the lessons of the different teachers. For only two teachers were communicative foreign language activities the most common type; for the rest, practice foreign language activities were commonest. (The nature of these practice foreign language activities will not be considered further here, though a considerable softening of the pattern of decontextualised repetition and drill activities noted in similar data collected in 1978 (Mitchell and others, op cit) could be detected. In these classrooms drills were typically contextualised, and topics 'personalised' even in a drill framework; structurally disparate utterances were frequently rehearsed in combination in functionally oriented drills.) L1-medium activities were in all cases the rarest type. For about half the teachers CFL activities averaged about one per lesson; for the rest they were less frequent (though the frequency of the different activity types did seem to be determined to some extent by the stage of progress through given coursebook units, with some 'stages' lending themselves more easily than others to the promotion of CFL activities).

Only a small set of CFL activity types occurred at all frequently in the 122 lessons taught by these teachers. The only types of activity judged on more than three occasions to have a CFL dimension were:

- real-life/personal discussion (e.g. discussing what participants had done at the weekend or on holiday)
- role-plays and simulations (e.g. buying something in a shop or café; making plans for an imaginary outing)
- guessing activities (e.g. 'who am I?'; variants of 'I spy')
- games (various memory and number games; Buzz, Bingo, etc)
- problem-solving activities (e.g. matching information from a map with verbal information)
- open-ended listening (to amusing or otherwise 'interesting' taped material)
- open-ended reading.

CFL activities of which between one and three instances were seen included the presentation in French of cultural information, 'open-ended' video-viewing, a practical activity (making mini-flashcards), story-telling, and a 'skill training' activity (how to tell which months have 31 days).

If this pattern of actual CFL activities observed is compared with all those logically possible, certain biases are immediately apparent. The commonest CFL activity types were both oral and interactive, with recorded and/or printed tests playing only a minor role (listening and reading CFL activities were virtually confined to one school). Secondly, the topics of discourse at issue during CFL episodes were largely restricted to the phatic and instrumental; very few CFL activities had a dominant informational purpose, or involved the acquisition of new skills by pupils.

The obverse of this pattern can be seen, if the rare English-medium

activities organised by these teachers are considered in contrast to the CFL activities. Such things as role-plays, games or guessing activities never took place through the medium of English. On the other hand, the giving of information about the French way of life typically did so. While not all teachers provided metalinguistic information for their pupils (teacher opinion being apparently divided as to whether the provision of grammatical 'explanations' is of any use to 12- and 13-year-olds), those who did so without exception used English for the purpose. 'Skill training' (how to read a map or timetable; how to convert miles to kilometres; how to read the 24-hour clock), if it proved necessary, almost always took place through English, and all discussions of unit objectives did so too. Lastly, any more-than-superficial discussion of real-life issues (e.g. 'Should World War II affect our attitude to the Germans?'), while rare, entailed a switch to English even in classrooms with high, stable levels of French usage.

Thus is appeared that any activities involving the introduction of substantial new information, concepts or skills were likely to take place in English, as were activities requiring a substantial, non-routine linguistic contribution from the pupils. This observed pattern seemed very unlikely to have occurred by chance. In order to explore further the notion that some types of activity are somehow more 'resistant' to foreign language use than others, during the subsequent action research phase of the project, a number of teachers undertook to experiment with some of the logically possible types of CFL activity which had been rare or absent during the observational visits. These experiments seemed to confirm that the rarity in the observational data of, for example, information activities conducted through the medium of the target language was indeed not the result of chance, but rather the result of a conscious or unconscious strategy of avoidance of an anticipated wealth of communication difficulties.

In one such experiment, for example, a teacher undertook to explain a 'grammar' point to her first-year class through the medium of French. The teacher herself was a fluent and confident French speaker, who normally used the language extensively as a means of communication both for classroom management purposes and through the promotion of CFL activities of the 'popular' types. The 'grammar point' in question was one routinely taught at an early stage to learners of French: the written forms of the present tense paradigm of <u>-er</u> verbs. As a preliminary to this activity, the teacher wished to introduce the concept 'verb' to the class. The following extract represents her attempt to do so:

T ... Alors on va maintenant - on va regarder les verbes. Qu'est-ce que c'est, un verbe? Un verbe.
P A doing word.
T Oui, c'est ça, c'est ça. Un verbe, oui. Alors, Pauline, tu peux me donner des verbes en anglais? Un verbe en anglais. Pardon, Noreen. Je me trompe toujours! Pardon, je m'excuse. Noreen, tu peux me donner un verbe en anglais?
P Anglais, emm - hockey?
T Ça c'est un verbe? Hockey?

P Oh! Run.
T Run, oui, ça c'est un verbe. Tu peux me donner un verbe en anglais?
P Jump.
T Jump, oui, oui.

/PUPILS GIVE FURTHER EXAMPLES/

P Shout.
T Shout, oui, c'est ça, c'est ça. Alors - ah c'est trop facile. Ça, c'est facile. Maintenant, des verbes en anglais - en français, pardon. Des verbes en français! Est-ce que -
P Na - na - natation.
T Ça, c'est un verbe? La natation, c'est un verbe?
P It's what you do, you swim.
T Oui, mais la natation, c'est swimming, swimming. La natation, c'est swimming.
P Lève-toi.
T Lève-toi, oui, ça c'est un verbe.

/PUPILS GIVE FURTHER EXAMPLES/

P Joue.
T Joue, joue. C'est un verbe, joue?
P Oui.
T Oui, c'est un verbe. Joue, c'est un verbe. Alors, aime aussi, ça c'est un verbe, n'est-ce pas? Aime, aime. J'aime le français. Aime, j'aime l'anglais. Aime, c'est un verbe.
P Non!
T Je te dis, oui, c'est un verbe! C'est un verbe. Ne t'inquiète pas, c'est un verbe ...

This extract is revealing of some of the limitations inherent in the choice of the target language as a means for the introduction/refinement of more abstract topics. At the start of the episode, the teacher is fortunate in that the children immediately recognise the lexical item 'verbe' (thanks to its close correspondence to the English word); one feels her repertoire of foreign language 'communication strategies' (see below) might have been severely taxed, in the absence of such a correspondence, to establish this equivalence. Secondly, the pupils are already equipped with an (admittedly primitive) definition of the verb as a 'doing word', to which the teacher can initially refer. When this definition proves inadequate, however, the only means apparently available to her in attempting to refine it while continuing to speak French is that of exemplification; it does not seem likely in this case that her attempts have been crowned with success! Somewhat similar difficulties were experienced by another teacher in attempting to explain historical information about the monuments of Paris and the related concept of the 'Unknown Soldier' to a different first-year class through the medium of French. The favouring of more concrete, immediate and personal topics for treatment in most classroom CFL activities at this early stage thus

appears rational, in the interests of limiting the number and character of communication difficulties to be coped with to levels which will not totally disrupt the pace and character of the projected activity. Knowing what topics to avoid seems an important component of the ability to sustain use of the foreign language as a communicative medium in the foreign language classroom.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHERS' TALK IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In all the classrooms observed in this study, the teacher was much the most important source of French 'input' to his/her pupils. While taped listening and reading material was available in all cases, and was everywhere used to some extent, the teacher's own foreign language speech was quantitatively the largest amount of French to which pupils were exposed; this applied to 'practice' as well as to communicative uses of French.

In this section the character of this French 'input' is examined more closely. The teachers' speech in French is compared first with the language syllabuses proposed in the coursebooks they were following, and secondly with their classroom talk in English.

All the teachers involved were of course attempting to develop active pupil mastery of a coursebook language syllabus, whether defined in structural or functional terms. One would thus expect the language material of whatever coursebook unit was being studied to occur frequently in the teacher's own speech, as he/she modelled, corrected etc the desired forms; and this turned out to be the case for all the teachers observed in this study.

Indeed, for a few teachers the language forms occurring in their own speech could be mapped fairly precisely on to those of the coursebook syllabus, with the teachers apparently operating some form of self-censorship (conscious or unconscious) so that their own foreign language utterances were effectively limited to those forms which the pupils were also expected to produce. While coursebook forms were common in speech, however, most of the teachers observed at times went considerably beyond the list of items specified for pupil mastery. For example, at the time of observation none of the classes had 'progressed' beyond present tense and imperative forms, as far as active study of the French verb system was concerned. Yet some teachers were observed to make regular use of a much wider range of verb forms, including regular use of perfect and imperfect tense forms and the aller + infinitive construction, as well as occasional subjunctive and future forms.

Similarly they used a range of constructions with modal auxiliaries (pouvoir, vouloir, devoir, falloir), again in advance of their appearance on the syllabuses, and more of the pronoun system than indicated (e.g. on, and both direct and indirect object pronouns). While a detailed analysis of vocabulary used by them has not yet been done, it is clear that many teachers went very substantially beyond the specified lexical list. (For example, one teacher used parts of over 70 different verbs in a single first-term lesson,

while only 46 were listed in the pupil syllabus of the complete first-year coursebook.) It also appears that these 'enriching' teachers did not feel constrained to realise language functions listed in the coursebook syllabus only with the specified exponents. In the following example, for instance, the function of giving a 'command' is realised successively through imperative and declarative forms:

T Tournez à la page 6! Colette, tu lis l'exemple.

And in the following example a wide variety of forms is used to ask a single question:

T Elle va à Dieppe. Où est-ce? ... C'est où? C'est dans le sud? Où c'est, Dieppe? Où est Dieppe? C'est dans le sud ou dans le nord? ...

Such variation was common in the teachers' speech, well before anything more than a single form had been officially studied.

This 'enrichment' of the teachers' own speech appeared to come about largely as a result of the teachers' commitment to the use of the foreign language for communicative purposes, and more particularly, for classroom management purposes. The teachers whose French mapped most closely on to the coursebook syllabus were those who used French least for management purposes. But there were several teachers in the study who organised relatively few substantive pedagogic activities which appeared communicative in character (i.e. of the kind discussed in the foregoing section), but who carried on a succession of practice foreign language activities in a bath of managerial CFL. (For example, the frequency of occurrence of the aller + infinitive construction seemed clearly linked with the decision to use French to tell people what they were going to do next!) The implications of this for the foreign language input to pupils can be seen from the table on page 50, which summarises the verb forms used by one participating teacher recorded at the start of the school year during her third French lesson with a new S1 class. The high frequencies for je m'appelle, tu t'appelles, j'habite, tu habites derive from the language syllabus items being practised, in a mixture of practice and communicative activities (predominantly the former); virtually all other forms used by the teacher (mainly, at this early stage, commands realised through imperative verb forms) arose in the course of classroom management activity, and did not derive from the syllabus intended for pupil mastery at this stage.

Teachers committed to CFL use in classroom management, therefore, seem to have liberated themselves from any notion of 'syllabus speak' as the only proper form of foreign language input to pupils (whatever they may be expected to produce in return). The teachers involved in this study also however consistently attempted to speak 'correct' French, only on very rare occasions consciously resorting to pidginisation as a simplification/ communication strategy. Only one teacher (a native speaker of French, as

VERB FORMS IN A TEACHER'S SPEECH (LESSON 3)

| VERB | Imper | | Pres Indic | | | Other forms |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2p.s. | 2p.p. | 1p.s. | 2p.s. | 3p.s. | |
| aller | 3 | 19 | - | - | - | - |
| s'appeler | - | - | 17 | 36 | - | - |
| s'asseoir | 1 | 6 | - | - | - | - |
| attendre | 1 | 3 | - | - | - | - |
| avoir | - | - | - | 1 | - | - |
| se calmer | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| comprendre | - | - | - | - | - | vous avez compris |
| demander | - | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| se dépêcher | 3 | - | - | - | - | - |
| écouter | 1 | 13 | - | - | - | - |
| être | - | - | - | - | 11 | - |
| s'excuser | - | - | 1 | - | - | - |
| faire | 1 | - | - | - | - | bien fait |
| falloir | - | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| finir | - | - | - | - | - | vous avez fini |
| habiter | - | - | 17 | 33 | - | - |
| lever | - | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| ouvrir | 3 | - | - | - | - | - |
| parler | - | - | - | - | - | il faut parler<br>tu as parlé |
| plaire | - | - | - | - | 1 | - |
| poser | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| prendre | 1 | - | - | - | - | - |
| recommencer | - | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| répéter | 1 | 7 | - | - | - | - |
| répondre | 1 | 1 | - | - | - | - |
| suffir | - | - | - | - | 10 | - |
| se tourner | 2 | - | - | - | - | - |
| travailler | - | 2 | - | - | - | - |
| venir | - | 10 | - | - | - | - |
| voir | - | - | - | - | - | voyons 1<br>on va voir 2 |

it happened) produced 'deformed' utterances of the following type at all regularly:

> T Neil, l'année dernière, l'année dernière .... Last year, l'année dernière, où vas-tu passer les grandes vacances?

It seems that the commitment to provide pupils at all times with a formally 'correct' model of the target language is a sufficiently strong element in the professional ideology of the foreign language teacher to make such 'simplifications' unacceptable to most.

The French spoken by these teachers thus appears richer and more complex when compared with the language syllabuses they are teaching. However, important evidence of their use of other kinds of simplification strategies emerges when their talk in French is compared with their talk in English to the same classes. Such comparisons reveal many classic features of 'foreigner talk' in their French such as heightened paralinguistic features (stress etc), slower speech, more frequent pauses, and clearer articulation. The teachers' foreign language speech was always easy to transcribe, their English speech by no means so easy!

The following pair of extracts are drawn from an action research study focusing on the presentation of 'background' material about the French way of life. One teacher taught similar material to two different first-year classes, using the foreign language with one group and L1 with the other. In these extracts the teacher is explaining how you behave on a French bus.

> How to behave on a bus (from the teacher's commentary on a slide showing a bus and bus stop)
>
> English version:
>
> 'Emm, if you've got one of the yellow tickets, the tickets de métro, you can use that on the bus. If you've got one of these (HOLDS UP TICKET), when you come into the bus here, there's a machine on your left, and you put it in the machine, which emm cancels your ticket. If you don't have a ticket, you pay the driver there.'
>
> French version:
>
> 'Alors vous avez besoin d'un ticket de métro... (...) Si j'ai un ticket - (HOLDS UP TICKET) ... Alors c'est comme pour le métro. Là c'est marqué 'Métro/Autobus'. Alors si vous avez un ticket comme ça, vous montez dans l'autobus et à gauche là il y a une machine. Tout le monde comprend? Il y a une machine. Alors on prend le ticket - on met le ticket dans la machine, comme ça (GESTURES), et ça marque - la machine marque le ticket. Tout le monde comprend? (A PUPIL: 'Oui') Alors, si tu n'as pas de ticket, il faut payer au conducteur là. Il faut payer... Tout le monde comprend, oui? ....'

These extracts illustrate some further important 'simplifying' characteristics of the French spoken by these teachers. Their utterances in French were typically short by comparison with those in English, and usually more analytic, expressing one proposition at a time. Their French speech was highly redundant, and used fewer pro-forms; it was also highly context-dependent, with frequent deictic and mimetic gestures. Lastly, their French speech was more overtly interactive, with the teachers constantly seeking positive indications of pupil comprehension, often by explicit questioning ('Vous avez compris?'). Most of these features have been noted by other researchers as characteristic of foreigner talk (e.g. Hatch 1979). The teachers' foreign language speech also shared some characteristics with 'mother talk' (the speech of caretakers with young children: see e.g. Snow and Ferguson (eds) 1977). As in mother-child interaction, a set of language routines had clearly become established in the language of these foreign language classrooms (to do with activities such as calling the roll, correcting homework, and organising the physical environment of books and furniture). Such familiar linguistic routines constantly provided a basis for development by platforming (building on established routines and social knowledge to extend linguistic knowledge). Thus in the following example, familiarity with the kinds of things teachers say in certain contexts guides pupil guesses as to the meaning of a new phrase:

T Oui?
P Emm ... j'ai - j'ai oublié mon livre ...
T Bon - heureusement tu n'en as pas besoin. Tu n'en as pas besoin. What do you think I am saying, 'tu n'en as pas besoin'?
P It doesn't matter.
P You don't need it.
T Oui, c'est ça. You don't need it, tu n'en as pas besoin.

The teacher also commonly used a procedure akin to the expansions characteristic of caretakers' speech (where the adult echoes in full 'correct' form the non-standard utterance of the child); in the teachers' case, they echoed in the foreign language the L1 or interlanguage utterances of their pupils (and insisted on repetition of the foreign language version with more success than the caretaker can hope for). For example:

T Ehh - enlève ton anorak s'il te plaît. Oui?
P Can I open a window?
T Comment?
P Open the window.
T Est-ce que je peux ouvrir la fenêtre?
P Est-ce que je peux -
T Ouvrir -
P Ouvrir -
T La fenêtre. Vas-y, oui, vas-y.
P . Miss.
T Oui?
P Eh, moi déteste ... homework.
T Je déteste les devoirs, tant pis!

Thus although these teachers typically spoke a more or less standard, 'correct' French, considerably richer than the coursebook syllabuses they were following, they nonetheless constantly adapted their foreign language speech in ways likely to make it more accessible to their pupils. (Only once during the full range of studies did a French-using teacher fail to adapt in this way, and teach a French-medium episode at a level clearly 'above the heads' of his class. On this occasion the teacher, normally a skilled user of many simplification strategies, had exceptionally positioned himself out of eye contact with the pupils; this suggests the importance for teachers of moment-to-moment monitoring of all kinds of comprehension indicators (e.g. of 'the look in their eyes', a concept much discussed by the teachers in interview) in controlling the complexity of their own foreign language speech.)

It might be supposed that the combination of a degree of topic avoidance and teacher skill in the use of simplification strategies, while making for short-term communicative effectiveness, might lead to a 'plateau effect' in the foreign language speech of the classroom teacher. The Communicative Interaction Project data is being examined for traces of such an effect, and it does seem that some teachers' French hardly changed in complexity or range between the first and third terms of the school year, or between first- and second-year classes. However, in the brief comparison with 'mother talk', we have already noted platforming and expansion as two features of foreign language teacher talk tending to disrupt any such equilibrium; and more generally speaking, a majority of the teachers appeared to translate their general commitment to expand the foreign language competence of their pupils into a dynamic process of 'complexification' of their own foreign language talk. Thus for example, the lexical inventory of one teacher more than doubled between the beginning and end of a single term. For this group of teachers the introduction in communicative contexts of new foreign language items and their integration into the collective foreign language competence of the class is a daily, routine occurrence. In the next section we consider an important group of strategies which help them to expand foreign language competence without sacrificing communicative foreign language use.

## COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

It seemed that one of the most crucial skills involved in sustaining CFL use in the classroom was that of predicting and solving the comprehension difficulties of pupils as they arose. As we have seen this was achieved partly by the avoidance of topics and of activities likely to lead to very dense comprehension difficulties, and partly by simplification strategies of the kind discussed in the previous section. However, even within these limits, teachers using the foreign language and committed to develop their pupils' foreign language competence must constantly outrun their actual foreign language resources, and find it necessary to create and consolidate comprehension of particular foreign language items.

Moments of comprehension difficulty are obviously critical in all sorts of ways: for the survival of planned activities, for the maintenance of pupil motivation and involvement, they cannot be allowed to happen too often, and must be dealt with fairly rapidly and decisively, most of the time at least. The obvious solution in the British classroom is to resort to English, the shared first language of teacher and pupils; and of course in the short term this is highly efficient and involves least effort. However, systematic use of this particular tactic for conveying meaning seems highly threatening to the fragile convention of classroom CFL use. Where teachers in the study planned to teach a CFL episode but failed to carry it through to completion via the foreign language and instead reverted to English, it often seemed that supposedly momentary switches to English, simply to resolve some specific comprehension difficulty, were the critical incidents which led to a language switch at episodic level.

The teachers who were most successful in sustaining CFL use also at times used English as a tactic for conveying meaning. However, for this group of teachers, this was by no means the only tactic favoured. Such teachers appear to have available to them a wide repertoire of tactics for solving comprehension difficulties, with use of English involved in a subset only. These tactics are not unique to teachers; researchers looking at talk between speakers of unequal competence who do not share a native language have produced lists of so-called 'communication strategies' which look remarkably similar to the sorts of things that the Communicative Interaction Project teachers do (e.g. Tarone 1980; Faerch and Kasper 1980). But the teachers have been able to apply these wider communication skills in the elementary French classroom so as to support rather than abort CFL use when comprehension difficulties arise.

The foreign-language-medium communication strategies commonly occurring in the lessons of this group of teachers, either subsequent to the emergence of a comprehension difficulty, or in order to forestall one, were as follows:

Repetition The teacher simply repeats the problematic foreign language item, e.g.

> T Si vous commencez là et vous continuez tout droit, 3 km, vous allez arriver à l'autre Arc de Triomphe. Vous comprenez? ... Non? ... Ecoutez encore. Alain, si tu commences là ... et tu continues tout droit ... si vous continuez tout droit pour 3 km, alors vous arrivez à l'autre Arc de Triomphe.

Substitution The teacher substitutes another roughly equivalent item for the problematic one, e.g.

> T Alors les Tuileries, c'est un jardin - vous comprenez, un jardin? C'est comme un parc.
> P A park.
> T Oui. Alors c'est un jardin.

(In this case the teacher has of course selected as the substitute item a word with a close English parallel, parc. CFL-using teachers can and do derive considerable support from such parallels when teaching a language closely related to the native language of the learners.)

Explanation The teacher 'explains the meaning' of the item, e.g.

T Qui aime ça, patiner à roulettes?
P Madame.
T Oui, Bernard?
P Je ne comprends pas.
T Patiner à roulettes, ça veut dire patiner, mais pas sur la glace, mais avec ...
P Ah.
T Des chaussures à patiner, mais avec des roulettes comme ça (gestures)
P Ah, oui.
T Tu comprends maintenant, oui? Tu aimes ça? Tu aimes ça, patiner à roulettes?

Contrast The teacher constrasts the problematic item with others which in some way belong to a similar 'set', e.g.

T Tout le monde comprend, les autobus? .../.../ Alors, si vous voulez faire un tour de Paris, vous pouvez prendre le métro, vous pouvez prendre l'autobus Paris-Vision, ou vous pouvez prendre ça, un autobus normal. Jacques, tu comprends?

(Here the problematic item autobus is being contrasted with the already familiar métro and autobus Paris-Vision.)

Exemplification The teacher exemplifies the problematic item, e.g.

T Bon. Ecoutez la bande, et écrivez dans votre cahier, en anglais, les mois que vous allez écouter .../.../ Tu comprends, Michael?
P Non.
T Tu ne comprends pas, alors? Ecrivez dans votre cahier en anglais les mois que vous allez entendre. Par exemple, vous entendez 'janvier', et vous écrivez dans votre cahier, 'January'...

Clue-giving The teacher suggests semantically-related or associated ideas, e.g.

T Là, l'obélisque au milieu, ça c'est de l'Egypte. Vous comprenez, l'Egypte? Vous comprenez, les pyramides? Les pyramides! /.../ Alors ça c'est de l'Egypte.

This is obviously not an exhaustive list of all logical possibilities, but it does represent the foreign language communication strategies commonly used by

the teachers in this study. They also frequently used non-linguistic strategies of mime and gesture to resolve comprehension difficulties, as well as a variety of L1-medium strategies; this last group included the encouragement of L1 explanations among pupils (the teacher thus conserving his/her role as foreign language speaker) as well as translation by the teacher. The following extract from a second-year lesson illustrates the use of a number of different types of strategies in combination, to convey to pupils the ground rules for a new activity:

T ... Bon. Ecoutez. Je vais épeler les noms des mois de l'année. Essayez d'identifier quel mois je vais épeler. Vous ne comprenez pas, non?
PP Non!
T Non. 'Epeler', par exemple, emm... Carol Wilson. Je vais - je vais épeler son nom. C-A-R-O-L W-I-L-S-O-N (French pronunciation of letters) 'Epeler', qu'est-ce que c'est?
P2 It's her name!
T Bon, emm, qu'est-ce que je fais?
P3 (.....)
T Non. Je - un moment. Je vais épeler ehh, son nom. Je vais épeler son nom. R-O-B-B--bébé! R-O-B-B-I-E F-R-A-S-E-R. Qu'est-ce que c'est, 'épeler'?
P4 It's his name in French!
T Oui, mais qu'est-ce que je fais, moi?
P3 What's your first name?
T Ecoute. Que signifie, que veut dire le mot 'épeler'?
P5 It's your full name?
P6 Spelling!
T C'est ça, oui
P6 Spelling!
T Spelling, spelling. Maintenant je vais épeler les mois de l'année. ... Vous essayez d'identifier quel mois je vais épeler. Vous comprenez?
PP Non!
T 'Identifier' -
P3 Oui!
T Qu'est-ce que c'est?
P3 You give them out and (...) the other guy's name!
T Non, non, non. Je vais épeler les mois de l'année, 'janvier', 'février', 'mars', 'avril', et caetera, les mois de l'année. Moi je vais les épeler!
P3 Oh, the months!
T Oui. Moi je vais les épeler. C'est à vous d'identifier quel mois je vais épeler. Par exemple, par exemple, moi je dis: 'M A-Y'. C'est quel mois?
P3 May!
T Voilà. Tu as identifié le mois que j'ai épelé. Toi tu as identifié le mois que j'ai épelé. Vous comprenez?
PP Non!

T Tu comprends, Susan?
P7 Oui, je comprends!
T Qu'est-ce que c'est?
P7 You spell the months and we've got to try and pick the month you're spelling.
T C'est ça, exactement. Encore une fois, répète!
P7 You'll spell the months and we've got to pick which month you're spelling.
T You've got to -
P7 Try and pick the month you're spelling.
T Oui. Vous comprenez maintenant?
PP Oui.
T Est-ce que vous connaissez le jeu, 'Name that Tune'?
PP (.....)
T 'Name that Tune'!
P8 Ah, that's brilliant!
T C'est un programme de télévision, n'est-ce pas?
PP Oui!
T 'Name that Tune', bon. Vous essayez de nommer le mois que je vais épeler.
P9 'Name that Month'!
T Oui, 'Name that Month'. Vous êtes prêts? Levez la main! Bon. M-A-
P10 Mardi - oh, non!
P11 Mars!
T Mars, oui, c'est ça. Mars, voilà.

## CONCLUSION

The evidence collected within the Communicative Interaction Project regarding the classroom behaviour of a group of 'committed' teachers thus suggests that there is indeed considerable scope within the British classroom for providing pupils with direct experience of CFL use. In this the teacher plays a crucial role, both as the animator of all kinds of CFL-medium activities and as the central source for pupils of 'comprehensible input' in the target language (Krashen 1981). To carry out this role, it seems that the teacher must be a confident and adaptable foreign language speaker, skilled in both simplification and communication strategies; only such a speaker can ensure that extended foreign language input does indeed remain comprehensible, through continuous responsive adaptation to the learner's state of understanding. Space has not permitted discussion here of the evidence regarding message-oriented foreign language use by the pupils in these classrooms. But it emerges (to a limited extent even from the examples quoted in this paper) that teachers committed to CFL use must also be prepared to promote it for a considerable period of time without much immediate reward, in the sense of evidence of pupil foreign language acquisition and willingness to attempt CFL productive performance. They will also encounter certain definite constraints on classroom CFL use. Some of these, to do with the topic of discourse, have been discussed; others of an affective kind, to do with pupils' willingness to suspend disbelief and accept

an 'artificial' communicative norm, also undoubtedly exist. The evidence thus confirms teachers' reports in interview of a considerable personal effort of will involved in attempting systematically to promote CFL use in the classroom, and suggests that it cannot be an 'all or nothing' affair: the shared L1 has an abiding place as one of the languages of communication in such groups. Nonetheless the feasibility of considerably extending CFL use beyond current British norms, and some of the activity types and strategies which provide the means for such an extension, emerge clearly from the work of this group of teachers.

NOTE

The research work described in this article was funded by the Scottish Education Department.

## 6. DISCOURSE IN A TELEVISION LANGUAGE TEACHING PROGRAMME: IMPLICATIONS FOR LEARNING

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There are obvious situational differences between a conventional classroom lesson and a television broadcast. These differences determine differences in the discourse, which in turn have implications for the learning process. This paper reports some results of an analysis of discourse in a television language teaching programme and raises some questions about learner participation.

### SCOPE OF THE ANALYSIS

An analysis of the BBC-TV Ensemble Programme 17 (broadcast on 3 March 1982) was made in terms of Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975) discourse acts with a view to specifying how television differs from the classroom in the type of participation it makes available to language learners. Ensemble is a BBC television and radio course in French for beginners; supporting books and recordings are available. The entire television course consists of 24 programmes, each having the same format. Each programme is made up of four main sections:

1. a 'tutorial' dominated by the presenter
2. a sketch with related activities
3. an animated cartoon with related activities
4. an episode of a serial film.

For the purpose of this discussion, the internal structure of the sketch, the cartoon and the film will be disregarded, although the relations of each with the other activities in the same section are subject to comment. The reason for this omission is that the units 'sketch', 'cartoon' and 'film' can be regarded as terminal elements in a hierarchy of discourse categories in the sense that they are analysable at a different level from that of this discussion. An analysis of the interaction presented in the film, for example, moves us into a different dimension - that of the discourse of serial films. Certainly this is relevant to an understanding of the television lesson, but it is of a different order. One might make the analogy of an artefact in an art lesson: the structure of the object is relevant, but analysis of it is not crucial to a formal description of the lesson. We might compare these elements with video in the live classroom, which is normally regarded as having a support role and is not expected to act as a teacher-substitute; as Candlin, Charles and Willis say:

> What video does is to add a further dimension - that of moving picture and synchronised sound - to the teaching aids and formats we already use. (Candlin and others 1982, p 30)

In the case of the television teaching programme, the broadcast (or conceivably the presenter) replaces the teacher, as it were, while film, sketch and cartoon take the 'video' role. Of course, programmes like Ensemble can be used as 'video', but this paper considers them in their primary function as direct instruction to home viewers.

## OCCURRENCE OF DISCOURSE ACTS IN ENSEMBLE

In the Ensemble broadcast analysed, some functions were discovered that the Sinclair and Coulthard (S-C) system fails to provide categories for; these are discussed in the section Use of L2: viewer participation below. The analysis showed that of the 22 functional acts found by Sinclair and Coulthard to characterise a lesson, ten did not occur in the Ensemble broadcast. These were check, prompt, cue, bid, nomination, acknowledge, accept, evaluate, loop, and aside. The following comments explain why each function is absent from the broadcast discourse.

1. check: This act is realised by questions like 'Have you finished?' The important point is that 'They are 'real' questions in that for once the teacher doesn't know the answer.' (S-C, p 40). Obviously 'real' questions are ruled out by the unilateral channel.

2. prompt: Typically 'Hurry up!' This reinforces a directive, and is ruled out by the fact that the broadcast (B) has no information on the viewer's (V's) response.

3. cue: 'Its sole function is to elicit a bid.' (p 41). Since bids are ruled out, cues have no function in B/V discourse.

4. bid: This is exclusively a pupil (P) activity requesting a turn, typically 'Sir', 'Miss', etc, but B cannot receive V signals.

5. nomination: The teacher (T) selects a specific individual P to take a turn. B is not aware of the individuality of V.

6. acknowledge: This shows that an invitation has been understood, and so by definition requires a bilateral channel.

7. accept: Typically, 'Yes!', 'Good!', etc, indicating that an act of P was appropriate. This can be triggered only by a reply from the learner and so is ruled out for B/V.

8. evaluate: 'Yes!', 'Good!' etc, commenting on the quality of P's contribution (not merely its appropriateness). This is similar to accept and is ruled out for the same reason.

9. loop: 'Pardon!', 'What?', etc, requesting a repetition or reformulation, can occur only in bilateral communication.

10. aside: The authors use this as a residual category, and describe it as 'instances of the teacher talking to himself' (p 44). The examples they give are 'Where did I put my chalk?' and 'It's freezing in here'. These cannot be paralleled by B, which is bound by the script.

It may be noted that the bulk of these items are ruled out for the same reason: the unilateral nature of the communication channel. 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 are all clear cases of this. 3 is parasitic on 4 and so, in effect, is ruled out on the same grounds. 5 (nomination) is not incompatible with a unilateral channel, at least insofar as specifying an individual recipient is concerned (viz live record-request programmes), but the function of nomination in the classroom is in effect to offer a 'turn', and without communication from the nominee to the nominator there is no point in individualising the nature of the channel.

So far, the acts that appear in classroom lessons and not in Ensemble are ruled out by the unilateral channel. Two other acts listed by Sinclair and Coulthard also fail to appear in the script but are overtly assumed by the programme. These are reply and react, which provide respectively linguistic and non-linguistic responses to directives and elicitations. The correlates of reply and react in the broadcast are scripted pauses to allow for V responses. If we think in terms of the B/V situation as a two-part process, taking a God's-eye view, reply and react are present in the discourse, but as V has no channel to B, the status of these acts is clearly different from that of their counterparts in the classroom since they are non-communicative.

The classes of S-C acts that do occur in the broadcast text are marker, starter, elicitation, directive, informative, clue, comment, silent stress, metastatement, conclusion. Of these, elicitation, directive and clue overtly assume an actively responding recipient. Elicitation and directive request a linguistic and non-linguistic response respectively, and clue helps P to respond to these by offering additional information. The remaining five acts (marker, starter, informative, comment, silent stress and metastatement) can occur in a text independently of any productive activity on the part of an interactant, i.e. they are integral to the presentation of information, opinion etc, and fully compatible with a unilateral channel.

The analysis of this broadcast in terms of Sinclair and Coulthard's acts then bears out intuitive observations regarding the differences between the classroom lesson and the broadcast and indicates that there are formally identifiable correlates at the discourse level. We can now proceed to look in more detail at the implications of the structure of Ensemble (and presumably of similar programmes) for the language learning process.

## THE VISUAL ELEMENT

A striking omission from the account so far given is the visual element.

Since the medium under discussion is television, it might be expected that the visual image will predominate. In fact, this is not the case. A sound recording of Episode 17 of the TV Ensemble is, with few exceptions (see below), as fluent and comprehensible as a radio broadcast.

In a radio arts programme a few years ago, a speaker reviewing the television production of the Agamemnon made this surprising statement: 'I think we make an error when we assume that television is primarily a visual medium' (Kaleidoscope, BBC Radio 4, 8 March 1979). The observation was not developed, but the implication might be that, unlike the cinema, the small screen can rarely achieve effective communication by visual images alone but is heavily dependent on sound. In the case of a language programme the dominance of sound might be more readily explained than in many other instances, particularly in view of the emphasis on the spoken medium in current language learning pedagogy.[1] But, as already mentioned, a series like Ensemble is designed as a multi-media package with written text, recordings and radio programmes, and so we might anticipate maximum exploitation of the visual potential in the television component.

Consequently, we might predict that the main contribution to language learning in a programme of this kind would be the maximally visual components: the cartoon Renard, and the film L'amour de la vie. As Sherrington observes:

> 'Television can present 'natural' situations within which language occurs - with no forced intonation patterns, no contrived action ...' (1973, p 25)
>
> 'The more real the language is to the learner, the greater its teaching value will be.' (ibid, p 26)

Sherrington links these comments to his claim that

> 'there is some evidence that Firth's notion of context of situation ... has been borrowed by some writers of courses, especially audiovisual courses, and of television programmes.' (ibid, p 31)

It is also true that cartoons and films are closer to the normal, non-pedagogic role of television than are direct grammatical explication, drilling or fragmentary 'semi-acting' studio exemplification of points of grammar. Thus we might expect the intrinsic entertainment value to be a motivating factor and hence to enhance the effectiveness of these essentially 'televisual' elements.

However, these expectations are not supported by the research if we can take viewers' evaluation as valid for estimating the relative value of the components of the programme (see Hill and others 1976). When asked to rank the five parts of the programme in order of usefulness, an overwhelmingly large proportion of viewers placed the film serial and the cartoon very low. Even if viewers underestimate the pedagogic value of these sections, these findings cast doubt on our suggestion that familiar entertainment format will positively affect motivation.

The most popular section of the programme was the section headed in the questionnaire 'Grammar presentation'. An analysis of the visual element in this section reveals that most shots consist of a close-up of the presenter or an actor. Also, frequent use is made of slides, exclusively of written material (except in the explanatory material related to the cartoon). One distinctive difference between television and radio is that television can cite sample sentences in written and spoken mode and can present them simultaneously from the same source. Indeed, this is essential if written material is to be used effectively with television since there are overwhelming difficulties in using a book simultaneously with viewing, whereas a book combines well with radio listening. In Ensemble, the written form is superimposed on the image of the speaker or presented alone on the screen. The latter is particularly the case in drilling. Very rarely, the focus on the written form is such that there would be a breakdown in communication at the sound-only level hypothesised above. Thus when the image

is presented, the presenter offers the following orally:

> 'Notice anything? 'Il est allé. Elle est allée.' The point is that when you form the past tense with être, the past participle behaves just like an adjective.'

The interrogative 'Notice anything?' is functionally a directive to pay attention to the words on the slide. It is meaningless without the visual item, and the oral citation does not make the point, since the phenomenon in focus (gender agreement of past participles) is not phonetically registered. The purpose of the oral citation is, of course, to draw attention to the lack of a phonetic correlate for the mute 'e'. The explanation that the participles 'behave like adjectives' seems perversely oblique unless we know that it refers back to something previously taught and we can see the written forms on view (though, even granting these facts, it must be judged as a dubious teaching technique).

Another way in which the visual noticeably contributes to the presenter's role is through paralinguistic communication behaviour in which smiles, nods, 'questioning' facial gestures, etc, enhance the communication and further the simulation of face-to-face interaction. Ostensive behaviour with realia other than written forms also requires a visual mode; this is exploited mainly in the introduction to the cartoon and the film and the tuition material identified with the cartoon, stills being used in these cases. Thus we have Renard's voice: J'ai frappé à la porte, coinciding with a slide showing Renard knocking on a door. This is followed by a repetition of the utterance with the slide plus a caption with the written form of the utterance.

Drills too utilise visual cues, but only as a support for the oral cue. For example, the drill with the frame Je suis allé is cued by an off-screen presenter saying à Paris, coupled with an image of a close-up of Paris on the map.

It would be rash to suggest on the basis of these observations that for most of the broadcast the visual element is no more than a superficial veneer on what is in effect a radio programme. It does seem to be true that an analysis of the language reveals little of the visual element's significance, which is surprising, but this is not to comment on the importance of the visual element in terms of the effectiveness of the medium.

Even if it were true that the visual contribution to understanding, memorisation etc is minimal, it may still be the case that it has great value at other levels. Hill, Howson and Innes report that the Kontakte television programme was more popular than the radio programme and that the audience was 'virtually constant throughout the course' (op cit, p 123), though there was a slight decrease towards the end and a slight increase in the radio audience. Television is, in some sense that is hard to define, a more accessible medium than radio - more entertaining. It is not irrelevant that, although language is essentially primarily realised as sound, this does not normally occur in isolation from other relevant sensory stimuli; thus, to an extent, television approximates more closely to real speech situations than does radio. This may be a part of its appeal, and it ties up closely with Sherrington's point (quoted above) about 'real' language and its teaching value. Nevertheless, 'real' language in the sense of the bilateral interaction of Goffman's 'encounters or face engagements' (Goffman 1964) remains out of reach.

## USE OF L2 : VIEWER PARTICIPATION

Obviously a foreign language lesson differs from other lessons in that the discourse may be realised as utterances in two languages. This is not true for direct method, etc, but it applies to many language lessons in Britain at present and also to television language programmes. Outside the cartoon, film and sketch, the majority of French utterances realise two functions, neither of which is quite compatible with Sinclair and Coulthard's categories. Let us call these citation and modelling. Neither is a normal communicative function since its force as a speech act is independent of the utterance's propositional content. Citation (in this specific sense) occurs when the presenter utters an L2 expression as an example of a grammatical point, or as a quotation (from a sketch, film, cartoon) to be translated or commented on. Modelling is closely related, but is exclusive to drilling; an L2 utterance is offered as a model to be repeated or substituted for another. Since the function is similar, the same terms might be applied to utterances presented visually as well as orally. These functions as such are not exclusive to L2 learning situations (cf in a literature lesson, 'What is meant by 'The proper study of Mankind is Man'?'). What is unique is the fact that they are realised in a language other than that of the bulk of the discourse. A third function, also closely related, might be called

confirming. This is the utterance of an L2 expression after modelling and a pause. (It could be identified as S-C evaluate but it operates 'blindly'.) The use of French by the presenter in Ensemble increases as the course continues, but it is striking that at this stage (the seventeenth programme in a series of 24) he uses little French for direct communication purposes. In these respects, Ensemble resembles many classroom language lessons. Nevertheless most of the broadcast is in French, partly because of the large number of citations and modellings but, much more significantly, because of the sketch, the cartoon and the film, which are all exclusively in French.

It has already been noted that the acts reply and react are overtly allowed for in Ensemble by pauses related to elicitations and directives. More specifically they follow modellings in drills. The realisations of elicitation and directive in this programme are very limited in type and not prolific in token. They are:

1. Répétez (six instances)
2. You repeat them
3. You repeat them for practice
4. Say you went there
5. Notice anything?
6. Mais est-ce que Michel veut être riche?

A clearer idea of the amount of active Viewer(V)-participation assumed is gained when we observe that one V-response is required for each occurrence of 1, but 2 initiates a series of three modelling-pause-confirming units, 3 a series of nine, and 4 a series of thirteen. 5 is a single instance directing V to pay attention to a slide demonstrating participle gender agreement (see above). 6 is a doubtful case of elicitation; it is not a question that could be answered immediately, but the answer to it is found in the film which immediately follows it. It might therefore be regarded as a starter, whose function is to 'direct attention to or thought towards an area in order to make a correct response to the initiation more likely.' (S-C, p 40). Thus we have 41 linguistic responses assumed, 18 of them being straight repetitions and 13 being tightly structured substitutions involving the substitution of the locative phrase cued in French in the frame 'Je suis allé - ' but geared to teaching the tense form. The time allocated to pauses was 5 seconds each, a total of 3 minutes 25 seconds or about 12% of the total programme.

It is fair to say that a classroom language lesson which allowed only 12% of the time for pupil talk could expect a low rating on most conventional evaluation measures (see Flanders 1964), but television is constrained here. Sherrington comments:

> 'The most that can be done is to allow time for viewer response which may or may not be utilized. The result, for most ELT television programmes for general audiences, has been an unwillingness to spend a great deal of time on the speaking skill.' (op cit, p 67)

Sherrington comments repeatedly on the limitations imposed on television's

contribution to language learning by its inability to provide an 'instant monitoring system' (p 70), and he is generally pessimistic about its value in teaching pupils to speak L2 (as opposed to understanding, knowing structures, etc). Yet Hill, Howson and Innes report that 42.59% of their sample placed 'expressing yourself in spoken French' as their first priority. Of course, the radio programme offers further opportunities for speaking and the recordings allow for unlimited repetition of utterance tokens, but according to Hill, Howson and Innes most students following Ensemble do not use the cassettes and 23.42% use only television and textbook.

## CONCLUSIONS

There is evidence that programmes of this type have considerable success in enabling students to acquire L2. On Kontakte, Hill, Howson and Innes claim:

> 'the general level of proficiency achieved in the three skills as measured by the Brighton tests is very high - scores of over 90% were achieved and at no point did scores fall below 50%.' (op cit, p 129)

Students following Ensemble who had previously studied French at school predominantly rated it much more successful than school courses; in response to the statement 'I learnt more French this year than in years at school', 61.65% agreed and only 23.31% disagreed.

Discourse analysis confirms that elements not present in the television broadcast situation are: significant opportunities for student speech, monitoring of student speech, and any form of 'real' language opportunities identified with face-to-face interaction. Classrooms are often condemned for their unreality; television with its restriction to unilateral communication is inevitably still more artificial.

In addition, the television broadcast lacks a number of features often regarded as general requirements for successful classroom learning regardless of subject (but often specially stressed in language learning), e.g. nominating, accepting, evaluating - again acts identified with two-way communication between teacher and pupil.

'Communicative' language teaching (or communicative learning/acquisition) receives little more than a nod of recognition from Ensemble, and it is difficult to see how it could be otherwise if, as Breen and Candlin argue,

> '... the learner must commit himself to undertake communicative and metacommunicative acts while working with other participants in the group ...' (Breen and Candlin 1980, p 100)

The apparent success of programmes like Ensemble must cast some doubt on the view that either realistic communication activities, dominated by pupil talk, or individual teacher-pupil interaction (with recognition of pupil

contributions as priorities) are necessary for successful language learning. It is true that television has a number of advantages, including the possibility of assembling an array of native speakers, but many apparent advantages - films on location, cartoons, etc - are not necessarily ruled out for the classroom; in fact, the classroom situation is considerably more flexible than the television.

Detailed research would be necessary to identify the positive variables in the television situation that cancel out the limitations (if they are in fact negative in influence, which needs to be shown). A strong candidate for one of these roles would be motivation; adult language learning by television is almost exclusively voluntary at the macro- and micro-levels, and the research demonstrates a strong positive orientation towards the target culture: 60.95% gave 'general interest in France, its language, people and culture' as a reason for learning French (i.e. 'integrative' attitude, see Gardner and Lambert 1972), whereas only 17.67% indicated the 'instrumental' motivation, that it would be of benefit to them in their jobs (Hill and others, op cit, p 135).

It might be the case that the isolation of the student in the television situation is advantageous, again contrary to popular belief. Perhaps the possibility of learning in the comfort of one's own home, free of behaviour constraints (relevance, politeness, etc) is a decisive factor. It could also be relevant to the issue of inhibition in language learning.

Students may be correct in their low rating of the usefulness of the cartoon and the film as opposed to grammar presentation, but it is not at all certain. Also it would be a mistake to place too much emphasis on this. For one thing, the choice reported by Hill, Howson and Innes is ordinative and obligatory; there may be only a marginal difference between top and bottom in any given informant's rating (though even on other measures the film scored low). If they <u>are</u> right, the last shred of support in this data for a quasi-'real' language approach disappears.

Finally, it is possible that further research might lead to an even more drastic reappraisal of so-called 'passive' skills than has yet occurred. Widdowson and Urquhart (1976) (among others) have suggested that to read an expository text is to engage in question-answer interaction with the author, the reader supplying the questions to the author's 'answers'. A similar interpretation of television viewing is equally speculative but equally appealing. If students can gain considerable skill in speaking L2 (as Hill, Howson and Innes suggest) from a programme which offers such limited opportunities for speech, it is not implausible that the unilateral communication gap is somehow bridged by the learner in an imagined interaction with the presenter. It is popularly believed that viewers' attitudes to television performers, especially newsreaders, are akin to their attitudes to real-life acquaintances - they feel they 'know' them. Perhaps the simulation of interaction in <u>Ensemble</u> is convincing enough, and the viewer makes the conceptual leap, maximising the limited scope for

repetition and substitution and also internally contributing to the discourse in a way that a text analysis could not reveal.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that our understanding of language learning processes would be furthered by more rigorous analysis of the discourse of language learning, including non-linguistic features of the total situation.

NOTE

1. Dr Alan Davies (during discussion of a version of this paper at the BAAL Annual Meeting 1982) offered the enlightening suggestion that the probable reason for the low information content of the visual element is that the television programme is modelled on the 'lesson' rather than the 'film'.

PROBLEMS IN PEDAGOGIC THEORY

## 7. YES, BUT WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY 'COMMUNICATION'?

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At present, the communicative tide is in full flood. The various working parties which have been considering the shape of a common examination in modern languages at 16+ have unanimously attached themselves to the overriding priority of the ability to communicate as the objective of language learning, at any rate during the period of compulsory education. The relatively minor differences among them have concerned the weighting to be given to different modes of communication and the testing techniques to be employed rather than any major disagreements about communication as an aim. The conference held in Strasbourg in February 1982 to evaluate ten years' work in modern languages within the Council of Europe spelt this objective out in some detail, calling on member governments 'to ensure that at least one European language other than the mother tongue or the vehicular language of the area concerned, should be taught to all pupils from the age of about ten (or earlier according to local or national exigencies) with an adequate time allocation and in such a way as to enable them by the end of the period of compulsory schooling, within the limits set by their individual ability, to use the language effectively for communication with other speakers of that language, both in transacting the business of everyday living and in building social and personal relations, on the basis of mutual understanding of, and respect for, the cultural identity of the other'.

The focus on face-to-face communication within the programme of the Council of Europe has a political basis. Language learning is seen as a prerequisite for reconciling the free movement of people and ideas with the maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity. The approach is, however, fully compatible with the by now traditional linguistic stance adopted by the neogrammarians over a century ago and applied to language learning by Viëtor, Sweet, Jespersen, Palmer and others down to the present day. Dell Hymes' 'communicative competence', conceived as an anthropological response to Chomsky, was then taken up as a battle-cry (cf H-E Piepho's Kommunikative Kompetenz als übergeordnetes Lernziel im Englischunterricht (1974)). If the battle-cries and trumpet blasts have, as it seems, carried the day and cleared the field, an uneasy feeling persists that perhaps it is not quite so clear what it is that has triumphed - hence the title of this talk. On the one hand, some writers feel that the issue is trivial. 'Tautology rules: OK is all right!' Since any use of language is an instance of communication, all language learning is for communication. A fortiori, teaching is inherently a process of communication. 'Communicative language teaching' is thus an empty pleonasm.

If those who hold this view reinforce it paralinguistically with a hunching of

the shoulders and a turning outward of the palms, there is another school who go in for compressed lips and a deep frown. They see the communicative approach as shallow and empty, hostile to culture and to the life of the spirit, anti-intellectual, replacing a humane education by a mere training in the banal clichés by which the transaction of daily business is minimally performed.

It is hardly possible for one person to hold both views at once; but both are held, and those who follow the communicative approach are sufficiently diverse to evoke, between them, these incompatible criticisms. It is possible to stretch the concept of communication to cover multiple-choice single-point grammatical testing as the candidate 'communicating' his knowledge of grammar to the examiner. And of course there are teachers who feel that they cannot demand more from their pupils than a handful of stereotyped responses rote-learned for coping with the commonest situations of daily life. However, neither of these cases is representative of human communication and a criticism which snipes at such caricatures is simply knocking down straw men. What are the real issues?

First and most importantly, the controversy over communication is one phase in the long conflict between the linguistic and philological approaches already alluded to above. It would take too long here to attempt to trace in detail the development of the philological tradition. Robins (1967, p 31), following Bekker, has shown how the Greeks came to order understanding (episteme), skill (techne), practical knowledge (empeiria) and manual work (peiria) in a descending order of social status and to see radically different educational provision as appropriate to each. He also points out that the Hellenistic scholars criticised the first systematic descriptive grammar of Greek, the Techne Grammatike of Dionysius Thrax, as reducing the study of language from the level of episteme represented by the enquiries of Plato and Aristotle to mere techne. In the later Western middle ages the seven liberal arts were divided into the trivium comprising the linguistic disciplines of grammar, logic and rhetoric, the basis of education, and the quadrivium. Even then, for grammar to be a worthy university discipline, it had to be 'speculative', that is to reflect the structure of reality, developing the Aristotelian philosophy. At this time, and for several centuries after, the basic learning of Latin was a vocational necessity. Hawkins (1981) tells how pupils at 'grammar schools' were taught by immersion methods.

The humanists of the renaissance thoroughly discredited late medieval linguistic scholarship, turning its very vocabulary into terms of abuse, as is still to be seen in the way we use such expressions as 'trivial', 'speculative', 'logic-chopping', 'mere rhetoric', etc. They rejected Medieval Latin, which had developed in response to the changing requirements of administrative, intellectual and religious life, as barbarous, looking back across that void to the literary norms of a golden age. Their aim was to liberate literary creativity and since we continue 500 years later to speak of a rebirth, we must surely adjudge them to have been successful. On the other hand we see the origin of many negative attitudes from which we still suffer: the attachment to the fixed norms of a golden past, with intervening language

change viewed as barbarism, solecism, corruption, decline; the opposition of high literary style, careful and consciously constructed written prose, to the cheap, ill-formed banality of everyday usage.

Perhaps the most important long-term consequences of the discrediting of medieval scholarship were the liberation of the European vernaculars and their rise to the status of institutionalised national state languages (in which process politico-economic factors were doubtlessly of great importance), the development of vernacular literary cultures and widespread literacy. A direct line may also be drawn to the radical critique of natural languages by Bacon, and to the development of mathematics as a language more suited to the description and manipulation of the natural world. Only in our own generation have these two long-term tendencies reached their zenith. The philosophical grammar of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries preserved much of the legacy of scholasticism until it was swept away by the minds of empiricist historians. The belief that Latin and Greek were the natural instruments for the training of the young mind died a lingering death; it is only a few years since the life-support system was switched off and there are still many mourners who regard the abolition of university entry requirements for Latin and the abolition of the grammar schools as an intellectual disaster. In his biography of Arnold of Rugby in Eminent Victorians, Lytton Strachey duly notes the introduction of modern languages as junior partners of the Classics. We are apt to forget how recently modern languages have gained an assured place in university studies. In the nineteen-fifties the first Professor of Italian at Oxford (admittedly then emeritus) could write to The Times to recall being introduced to the distinguished Master of a College as 'our new Professor of Italian' to be met with the enquiry: 'And what is Italian?' There is one ancient college at Cambridge which will not (at any rate until 1978 would not) admit students to read modern languages, of whose study as an intellectual discipline the Fellowship remained unconvinced. The 'traditional' pattern of 'lang-lit' studies in modern languages is not in itself of any great antiquity except as a pattern inherited from Classics. In fact, the respectability of modern languages was largely established by the great nineteenth-century German historical school. The reaction against historians initiated by the English Faculty at Cambridge after 1917 (Tillyard 1958: The muse unchained), has led only quite recently to the virtual abandonment of serious linguistic research in many departments in favour of literary research.

f in this brief survey I have concentrated upon developments in higher education and research, it is because the attitudes and the intellectual equipment of teachers are largely acquired at university and because in the history of education it is most common for innovation to have its source in ideas originating in university research and entering the schools after some delay.

For many years a self-reinforcing cycle linked schools and universities. Language was a chore for pupils/students and teachers alike. Of no theoretical interest or practical value in itself, it was a (more or less) necessary prerequisite for the study of foreign literary texts, which were

nevertheless studied and discussed mainly in the mother tongue right up to the highest level - indeed at that level sometimes as a matter of ideological conviction! The operation of the cycle is not difficult to predict and its results are plain to see. Teachers educated in this way bring no concepts from their university studies which will make early language teaching more than a chore. If pupils are presented with the language and drilled in it, they should learn. If they don't, they are either of low ability, or lazy, or indifferent. Alas, many of them are one or the other. Consolation in this desert is to be found in the few who learn easily, are interested, and can be brought in the sixth form to enjoy imaginative literature, even through the dark glass of another language. The literary concepts involved and the serious discussion of the problems of personal relations explored in great literature are, of course, at the limits of the young person's capabilities and experience and way beyond his or her expressive possibilities, which can nevertheless be expanded and brought to maturity through exposure to good writing and the careful composition of essays and the closely controlled work of translation. Future university students are largely self-selected as those who respond favourably to this way of spending one's life. Those to whom it does not appeal do not get beyond the 'chore' stage and may drop out after three or five years, never having once used the language for any serious purpose whatsoever. Even if they have learnt easily, and are interested in taking the language further, our specialised sixth forms afford little opportunity for continuing language study.

This picture is now changing. 'Crossbench' A levels are more frequent, Institute of Linguists examinations are more widely recognised and the BOTB (British Overseas Trade Board) scheme is moving through its pilot stages. Various courses in polytechnics, colleges and some universities are available to the non-literary specialist, but since few of these feed back teachers into the school system, their existence does not greatly influence the operation of the cycle. Teachers are predominantly recruited from among those who accepted and succeeded well in the text/example/drill routines leading to O level, chose a literary pattern of study with the concomitant disciplines of prose, translation and essay, succeed to A level, and then chose to continue in the same path for a further three years (plus an intercalated 'year abroad'). A high proportion of those - often the most successful - who have chosen this form of higher education have no intention of entering the teaching profession. They remember the years of early chore and have noted the attitudes of teachers and the effect of years of chore upon them. Nothing in their school or university experience has led them to believe that things could be different, or given them the knowledge, understanding or skills to face the challenge with confidence or the ability and will to do things differently.

Admittedly, BEd studies in a college of higher education have a different perspective. Too few of the colleges have thought through the implications of that perspective. Too many have pursued pale copies of university lang-lit curricula with the pedagogics spread more thinly. The future, it seems, does not lie with them. The university language departments, seeing only a minority of their products going into teaching, see no reason to take

the future career interests of teachers into account. That can be left to the departments of education (UDEs). UDEs work under enormous time pressures. A term is taken out for teaching practice, general pedagogics claims its share of a limited timetable. Examinations cut into the final term. It is as much as a dedicated UDE lecturer can do to tackle attitudes and the specialised professional aspects (i.e. the didactics and methodology) of language teaching. There is not time to teach (or to learn) fundamental theories, areas of knowledge and personal skills which the language departments have disregarded. In addition it must, I suppose, be said that the student, and even more the newly-qualified teacher, is likely to be influenced more by experienced teachers who represent 'hard reality' if what they practise is in conflict with what is propounded in the UDE.

I consider that a great deal of the crisis of confidence evident a few years ago among language teachers, and the very real unhappiness experienced by some sincere, intelligent and cultivated members of the profession, can be attributed to the operation of that cycle. Accordingly, I do not consider the 'communicative turn' as a trivial matter. It has broken the cycle, broken it decisively, and broken it from below. The change of climate has its intellectual origins in the academic linguistics of the last century, but the dynamic has come from the dozens of teacher groups that have - admittedly using the tools provided by research - taken syllabus planning into their own hands. We have every reason to be proud of the decentralised democratic system that made development of graded objectives possible, and of the body of teachers that has risen to the challenge of languages for use and for all.

There is now no doubt of the aim of the modern language teaching profession in this country, or of their will and professional dedication. All impressed the teachers involved in similar developments in other European countries who visited British schools two or three years ago under the aegis of the Council of Europe. The visitors noted, however, that determination and dedication were often combined with technical weakness. The will to teach for communication was there, but teachers - understandably, in view of what has already been said - were uncertain of what exactly was entailed in the concept of communication and how the ability to communicate was to be imparted. This uncertainty is certainly not confined to language teachers, though a Martian might find it surprising. There is a profound public ignorance of the nature of communication and in particular of human language, its place in the life of society and the individual. This ignorance shows itself whenever a language issue comes to be of public concern. Language awareness is surely one of the great lacunae in British education and one which BAAL is pledged to fill.

Communication has of course to do with belonging to a community and having things in common. It is not something that any individual can do alone. This is perhaps too obvious to state, but its consequences are considerable. We are used to an individualistic, even solipsistic, view of formal education (compensated perhaps by team games), and even more committed to an individual basis for the evaluation of educational achievement. Consequently we attempt to anatomise communication, which

is essentially a social activity, into the individual actions by participants which go to make it up. In language examining, therefore, we attempt to trivialise one side of a communication so that the relative success or failure of the interaction can be fairly and squarely attributed to just one of the parties. The effect is to neuter the communication and convert it into self-display. This tendency is the stronger when the so-called 'four skills' approach is used. The 'four skills' are of course no such thing; they are simply an artefact of the anatomising of communication. Of course it is true to say that in any single act of human communication a message is produced by a sender and impinges upon a receiver. A pattern is conceived, and encoded by a complex of mechanisms in the central nervous system into motor nerve impulses which move muscular structures in such a way that a pattern is impressed upon a medium containing information that can be retrieved by the central nervous system of a receiver from the sensory nerve impulses triggered by the reaction of transducers to the disturbance created in the medium. We are inclined to see the process as linear information processing and in a number of ways it is useful to do so. It is, however, important to remember that many different interactive neural systems are brought simultaneously into operation, and that feedback loops of different kinds linking the systems concerned with the production and reception of messages are activated whenever a message is sent or received. A person who is speaking is also 'listening' to himself, a writer is also reading and probably also involved in some part of the neural activity concerned with listening and speaking.

Technology has made it increasingly possible and common for the participants in a communicative net to be separated in time and space as the externalised message or text can be manipulated in many ways before being presented to the receiver. It is a consequence of the artificial encapsulation of the educational process and its isolation from the events with which it deals, that these indirect and depersonalised forms of communication tend to predominate. In full face-to-face interaction, however, the activation of a large number of sensory and neuromuscular systems in all parties is of the essence. The linguistic message is embedded in a complex exchange of signs and signals using a number of sensory modes simultaneously as the parties work together (or not) to harmonise their reading of the situation in which they are involved, to set and pursue the goals of the interaction and to recognise their achievement. As they do so they call upon and then develop the knowledge of the world (including each other) they severally bring to the act and come to hold more of it in common. They also, as part of that process, call upon and develop their experience of linguistic communication in the community of which they form part, and indeed begin to form a sub-community and a sub-culture.

Seen in this way communication is indeed forming a community and coming to have something in common, an interaction which is jointly constructed through a relation which is so intimate that one partner complements and supplements the other. As both are 'speaking' and 'listening' simultaneously, discourse and even sentences may be jointly produced to such an extent that later neither party may quite know exactly who said what.

The burden of communication is thus always shared. In indirect, depersonalised communication the distribution of effort is inflexibly fixed. The sender may try to foresee the needs of the receiver, but then produces his message for better or for worse. The receiver must then make the best of what is presented to him. In genuine face-to-face communication the participants properly adjust to each other, sharing the burden appropriately. Leaving aside the constraints of politeness and social hierarchy, the more experienced, knowledgeable, skilful partner takes a greater share of the burden and greater responsibility for the success of the interaction than the partner who has less experience, knows less and is a less skilful communicator. In particular, in conversation with a non-native, the native speaker naturally accepts the dominant role in assuring the success of the communication. The foreigner makes the most of the resources at his command, but relies, to the extent of his disability, on the goodwill of the native.

In the case of two foreigners communicating through a common second language the same principle applies. If a certain threshold is not reached, communication will break down, or fail. Much more use will be made of gesture, facial expression etc, and interactional sights will be greatly lowered.

If these principles of linguistic co-operation are not followed, the interaction is not genuine, but neurotic. The question then arises, is linguistic interaction in our classrooms genuine or neurotic? If the latter, can we be surprised that it produces linguistic neurotics rather than genuine communicators?

What reports we have of classroom observation (surveyed by Lunt and Trim, 1982) indicate very little spontaneity, very little direct use of language as a tool to satisfy the learner's present need. We know that a great deal of time is taken up by the teacher talking English at the class. Individual responses are mostly forced, to check that a teaching point has been understood, with a view to correcting and drilling it if not. The National Association of Language Advisers enquiry (unpublished; see Lunt and Trim 1982) indicated that by the fourth form (14+) pupil activity was directed by most teachers to the rehearsal of 16+ examination activities. This pattern, where pupil responses are exclusively medium- rather than message-orientated (Dodson 1978), has been found in classrooms where the foreign language is the medium of instruction. If so, that would seem to mean that less genuine communicative interaction occurs than in those classrooms where teacher and pupils relapse into the mother tongue whenever there is a real meaning to be communicated for a serious purpose. One is almost tempted to rephrase Tacitus' comment on the Roman occupation of Britain: They create a desert and call it - language!

Even the brief schematic account given above indicates the range and complexity of interpersonal communication. What then does teaching for communication imply?

First, of course, it means creating in a learner the preconditions for communication to take place between him and another member of the speech community concerned. Effective communication presupposes an adequate knowledge and understanding by both parties of the language concerned as a symbolic system and the conventions governing its use. In addition, they must have some common understanding of the extra-linguistic parameters of the situation in which the utterance or text is embedded, by reference to organised models of the natural world and of human culture and society.

In addition to these different aspects of knowledge or 'competence', the language user must have developed the mental and physical skills necessary to act as sender or receiver. In indirect communication, using communication media such as books, newspapers, films, recordings, radio, television, public announcements, etc, the individual is called upon to act only as one or the other at any one time. In direct face-to-face communication the rapid switching and overlapping of roles make, as we have seen, additional demands which make conversation skills different from the sum of listening and speaking skills. Where they can be separated, productive skills involving stimulus-free recall are more demanding than the manipulation of temporal patterns in real-time speaking and listening.

In a communicative perspective, neither knowledge nor skills are ends in themselves, but prerequisites, necessary but not sufficient, for effective communicative action in pursuit of social goals in particular situations. That action must be steered and controlled by strategies appropriate to the task in hand.

Possibly for the reasons set out in the historical section of this paper, 'traditional' language teaching in secondary and higher education did consider knowledge an end in itself and promoted skills only in so far as they were necessary to the inculcation and testing of knowledge - what has been termed l'illusion intellectualiste. It might, of course, be contended that performance presupposes competence and that learning in a formal context should aim to maximise competence, leaving performance to nature. Traditional teaching also tended to confine its view of competence to linguistic form - knowledge of categories, elements and structures at the phonological, lexical, morphological and syntactic levels and the rules which specified and interrelated them - seeing linguistic competence as a preliminary to experience of the culture and giving little attention to socio-cultural factors in the language of everyday life.

The promotion of the notional-functional approach within the Council of Europe Modern Languages Project has been a conscious attempt to rectify this neglect. One consequence of the resulting phrase thesauri presented especially in Un niveau-seuil (Coste and others 1976, 1981) and Kontaktschwelle (Baldegger and others 1980, 1982) has been the rediscovery of the fact realised long before by H E Palmer, that the manifold business of everyday living is largely conducted by routine interactions involving the exchange of fixed locutions. Accordingly, a number of teaching programmes

have recently been based on such exchanges in a range of situations which the learner is likely to encounter. It is difficult to see why the practice has aroused such opposition. Such formulae are, for good reasons, genuinely used in the situations presented. If learned and reproduced they are effective in a way which builds confidence. It is only objectionable if communication is equated with the production of an indefinite set of formulaic utterances. Obviously experience with the language builds up more generalised resources, a grammar, to which the learner has recourse when dealing with less predictable interactions. However inadequate a slot-and-filler grammar may be for generating the full set of sentences constituting a language, it corresponds to the demands made by classes of situation in which all or almost all situational parameters remain constant and only one and two variables are permitted (e.g. shopping, expression of likes and dislikes, etc). There is no reason why the learner should deny himself such useful devices. Do we seriously doubt that we use them in our mother tongue? What is a mother doing when her child says 'Cake' and she replies 'Please may I have'? Have we not seriously underestimated the importance of concrete learning of words, fixed locutions and fixed sentence frames in everyday language usage because they are of so much less theoretical interest than the complex internalised rules which enable fluent native speakers to produce and interpret an infinity of sentences and sentence types they have not previously encountered? Naturally our aim is to equip the learner with this last competence too. The real question is, as usual, to establish the proper economy of learning, combining different kinds of mechanism to produce the best development of communicative proficiency. Not, please note, the best communicative proficiency at any one given time, but the best development - a problem deserving of serious study.

The same developmental path is unlikely to be found equally suitable for all learners. Indeed, in view of the enormous diversity of modes of communication maintained within any speech community, is it not reasonable to seek ways (cf Martins-Balthar in Un niveau-seuil, p 87ff) of allowing different types of learner to develop in different directions, in accordance with their different personalities, interests, preferred interactional roles, etc? The principle applies perhaps more strongly to expression than to the receptive role; we cannot so readily control other people's actions as we can our own. We need to be able to perceive, identify and interpret whatever is said to or written for us. Or rather, since we are always struggling to understand the intentions of others with an equipment always inadequate to the task, we need to acquire and develop strategies to extract from texts the information relevant to our needs and purposes. Essentially, the strategies are those of problem-solving. We form hypotheses about the sender's communicative intent, evaluating that in the light of our own needs, interests and intentions. We listen or read first to establish the hypotheses, then to predict, confirm and deny them. In face-to-face interaction we can help that process by supplying the speaker with feedback - repetitions, rephrasings, reaction signals, comments, questions which presuppose a particular reading, and so on. In the case of our not being able to perceive and identify what is said, we can ask for a repeat. If we do not understand we can ask questions for clarification. Clearly, it is an important part of teaching for communication

to provide the learner with an armoury of such devices and opportunities for using them.

This, incidentally, is a major reason for unilingualism in the classroom. Using a language is never unproblematic. Classroom experience should develop confidence in overcoming the challenges presented by communication difficulties rather than protecting the learner from reality except in predigested teaspoonfuls. Eric Hawkins has spoken of language teaching as 'gardening in a gale'. Fishman (1968) has argued convincingly that a minor language can maintain itself in a community only in a diglossic situation, that is to say when there are some privileged areas of experience from which the major language is excluded. The language classroom can become such an area. Within it, whatever communication problems present themselves must be solved, somehow, in the language of that place or not at all. Then, as in reality, the techniques for dealing with such problems will establish themselves.

Long monologues, in which the listener cannot intervene, are correspondingly more difficult to cope with. In real life they are less common than our discrete-skill teaching makes them appear. It must, however, be conceded that communication with people in another country is likely to be more indirect than within a community. Basically, in any case, the problem-solving approach remains applicable. It is unrealistic to want to censor speech so that it contains only language already presented to the learner or immediately or specifically taught. Teaching for communication means educating the learner to use his linguistic resources together with all his other human resources to extract meaning from texts relevant to his needs and purposes. Of course, there is a threshold of understanding below which communication collapses. We have all experienced that with languages of which we have only a marginal understanding. It is probably best to avoid that happening too often for learners. If possible, it is better to avoid collapse by careful selection and formulation of tasks and by cuing relevant items than by concocting or doctoring texts. Of course, some common sense is necessary in the selection of 'authentic' texts. Some may be conceptually beyond the scope of particular learners, or irrelevant to their needs and interests. Others, like Brian Rix's television programmes for the handicapped, seem almost made for use in the modern language classroom. In general, we are too timid. The enthusiastic response to Buongiorno Italia! (BBC Radio and Television, 1982-), with its use of unscripted but skilfully edited interviews with Italian speakers and complete exclusion of English, shows that learners are more willing to rise to the challenge of authentic speech than we believe them to be.

Reading is in many ways more amenable to a problem-solving approach, given that there is no basic literacy problem. The use of a standard typeface and the separation of words removes a whole dimension of problems in the initial identification of text. The ability of the eye to move to and fro over the text, to search for familiar words and key words, to pause over difficult items and if need be return to them, and the time to use reference works, all put the reader in a stronger position. Cognate words

are often more easily recognisable as such in their written representation. Redundancy can more easily be exploited if the structure of sentences and paragraphs is clear to view. Typography can also play an important part in structuring the act of reading. In my experience as an examiner, it is quite difficult to overtax the learner's ability to extract limited information from a text. The difficulty is much more to motivate the learner to read for information and pleasure, to identify genuine centres of interest appropriate to communication through written text. If for a particular learner one can make understanding a foreign language text the necessary key to obtaining information of intrinsic interest and importance, the battle is almost won. And surely it must be worthwhile at least once in a language learning programme demonstrating the possibility of extracting a certain amount of information from a written text in a related language without 'knowing' it? That suggestion may seem entirely heretical. It is, however, seriously meant. One aim of education must be the achievement of autonomy for the learner - his or her acquisition of confident positive attitudes, of study and information processing skills which will enable him or her to take charge of further learning and apply the knowledge and skills so far acquired to tackling the challenges presented by new problems and areas of experience. Part of this process is to demystify language learning. All texts are produced by people like us trying to express a meaning by means of a language fundamentally not so different from ours. If we want to find out what they are trying to say to us the task is not impossibly difficult if we set about it in a sensible and purposeful way.

This point brings me, finally, to the wider educational perspectives of teaching languages for communication. It is not simply a question of emphasising the practical utility of languages as against their cultural value. In fact, it is not that at all. Language and culture are so closely interwoven that effective communication with speakers of another language involves the learner in coming to understand and in some ways share in that culture. I would return to the point made at the beginning of this paper. Communication is essential to life and central to human existence. The information explosion makes the understanding of the concept of communication and its place in human life, social and individual, a prerequisite for a modern life to be lived with insight and practical success.

However, understanding and insight are to be gained not simply on the intellectual plane, but by experience which engages the whole person. There is scope here for a contribution from all subjects, as Bullock (1975) saw - strangely, unaccountably failing though to see the deep relevance of modern language study. It is naturally through the exploration of the mother tongue within and all about them that children can be brought to a realisation of themselves as interacting, independent, individual beings, to see what unites and what divides them, how they form part of many distinct but overlapping groups each with its special form of communication, making links and erecting barriers. They can see the way a child grows into the language of its community, they can become conscious of the articulation of meaning in relation to distinctions of form and be made aware of what they have all acquired which makes human beings able to co-operate so precisely and

flexibly in new situations with people they have not previously met or worked with, how deep intimacy can be established between two people, how experience, knowledge, values and beliefs come to be shared. They can relate this self-knowledge and mutual awareness to the scale of biological communication from the interaction of the simplest organisms with their environments through to the complex ethology of birds and mammals, to understand in depth the properties of human language which it shares with the communication systems of other primates and those which are fundamentally distinctive. They can understand the bases of communications engineering and information technology, the problems of man-machine communication and why some are so refractory. They can - or could, if teachers of the mother tongue and others saw it as a sufficiently significant aspect of the child's developing awareness of him or herself and the living and human world about them to be worth including in the curriculum. I take it that one of the commitments of BAAL is to make them more willing and more able to do so.

However, this growth of 'communicative awareness' (and self-awareness) cannot be confined to the mother tongue. Indeed it can only be profoundly misleading if it is. Most of our children still grow up in a monolingual environment and take the properties of the mother tongue - in our case English - for granted. They are profoundly ethnocentric and shut out as meaningless, irrelevant, alien and threatening ways of talking, thinking and acting which are different, in accordance with the sociocentrism which characterises that age. Prejudice and intolerance are easily aroused. It is of course possible, and desirable, to introduce the properties of other languages, especially those spoken by linguistic minorities represented in the class, into a 'language awareness' programme. But that is not enough. It is surely educationally important to the child not only to know that difference exists, but to know that the wall of incomprehension which divides one language community from another can be breached, and to learn that fact by doing it. This is why it is important to emphasise interpersonal communication, to achieve success and to come to terms with authentic language. Whatever happens to the European Communities as a politico-economic entity, the non-English-speaking world cannot be held at a distance or obliged to communicate with us only on our terms. We need a generation which is linguistically more sophisticated than our own to face the challenges of the Third Millenium. We need young people willing and able to go out to meet the rest of the world on equal terms, willing to recognise the validity of other ways of communicating and of organising experience and co-operation through language, and having the skills and confidence to manage those encounters. To build up steadily the communicative skills required in particular languages is a matter for lifelong experience supported by continuing education. By teaching for communication in schools we can at least launch them in the right direction in a well-found ship with proper equipment.

## 8. DEFINED SYLLABUS: CRUTCH OR STRAITJACKET

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I am aware that the title 'defined syllabus' is in fact tautological. Any syllabus is a definition of some sort because any syllabus is a selection from a total body of knowledge, a selection which a learner is presented with to learn, or a teacher defines for himself as the area that he wishes to cover at any given time. However, in the context I wish to treat, a defined syllabus means a syllabus defined in terms of vocabulary and grammar and perhaps in terms of functions, notions, topics and tasks as well. That context is also quite a definite one: that of the examining of modern languages in secondary schools in this country with a certain amount of reference to syllabuses devised in the many 'graded objectives' schemes[1] which have developed over the last four or five years. Discussion is particularly fierce at the moment because we are in the process of producing new examinations at age 16+ or rather of trying to replace the ones which are usually taken at age 16+. We are also beginning to make a radical reappraisal of A-level examinations, normally taken at age 18+, and this radical reappraisal means that the syllabuses are being put into a melting pot. What may come out is not exactly anybody's guess but we certainly hope it will be something quite different from what we have seen before. Whether such syllabuses should include lists of vocabulary and grammar is a matter of considerable controversy.

The problem was first borne in upon me a long time ago when I started teaching. At that time, the O-level examination was four years old and for O-level French there was no syllabus other than a description of the tasks in the regulations. That is, there would be a prose translation of about 200 words - no indication of register, topic or likely source. There would be a six-picture composition, the famous six-picture composition of 120 words or so, again with no indication of source or likely topic or the sorts of areas which people would be expected to write about, and so on and so on. This situation is still the same for some O-level courses. We language teachers then were very much in the dark in a way that other teachers were not. The history teacher did not teach history, he taught a period of history, usually defined by dates. A chemistry teacher did not teach chemistry, he taught particular topics in chemistry. The geography teacher did not teach geography, he taught again particular countries or particular areas or particular aspects of geography. But O-level French was O-level French and the definition of it remained a matter for custom, hearsay, old wives' tales and the leaks that used to come down from other teachers who were official examiners and markers for the Board, though they of course were sworn to secrecy as to what it was all about. There were a few rules of thumb, one being that subjunctives were not to appear at O level. If some unfortunate examiner by mischance happened to include the subjunctive, then from all

over the land there arose cries of 'foul', 'send him off' and such like. And this of course in spite of the fact that the subjunctive in French is widely used at all levels of language production.

A couple of years after I started teaching, the famous six-picture composition was about a man leaving an umbrella on the train and having to go back to the lost property office and get it, a quite reasonable sort of anecdote that one might have to recount on some occasion. However, it so happened that the textbook my pupils were using did not anywhere include the word for 'umbrella' and my candidates were without it. They found it extremely offputting not to know the word for the object that was the centre of the drama and they were forced into various circumlocutions like 'the thing that he had left on the train' or 'the thing that you put up to keep the rain off'. This added of course to their word count but didn't make the story sound terribly natural. I made sure, after that, that they knew the word for 'umbrella', of course. A couple of years later my industry and theirs was rewarded because the six-picture composition this time told us of a lady going out shopping. First picture, view of hall with umbrella standing by the front door; second picture, six mice crawling along into the umbrella; third picture, lady preparing to go shopping; fourth picture, view of window with rain coming down; fifth picture, lady picking up umbrella and going out; sixth picture, lady opening umbrella and shower of mice falling on her head - an everyday event of the sort that we spent years teaching our pupils to cope with. It was a triumph because they knew the word for 'umbrella' and at the same time a disaster because they did not know the word for 'mice'. The upshot of that situation was of course that we added 'mice' to our ever-growing list of words that we were expecting our people to know. This sort of thing resulted in teachers generally and textbooks in particular providing candidates with far too inflated a workload in terms of the range of words and grammatical structures that they were thought to be required to know for O level.

When the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) system of examining was set up in 1964 it was assumed from the start that there would be a good deal more definition of what candidates were required to know than was then common practice at O level. So CSE syllabuses have always had some definition of some sort. Sometimes this has been very little more than O level anyway; sometimes it has been in terms of topics. One or two CSE boards have produced a booklet of several pages listing all the vocabulary and grammatical points to be absorbed. O level followed to a certain extent in these footsteps and the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) had a Spanish word list for Spanish O level some two or three years ago. The Associated Examining Board (AEB) has a word list in French, German and Spanish, and the 16+ examination which is a combined CSE/O-level examination run by JMB and the Yorkshire Regional Examinations Board[2] (it has been running for close on ten years now) has always had a list of words and grammatical structures which candidates are expected to know for the examination. There are some peculiar contradictions and inconsistencies in those lists which we shall look at in a moment.

The arguments for this sort of list are then:

1. If a candidate is to be expected to use or react to particular words or structures then those words/structures should be specified in advance so that the candidate is not filled with alarm and despondency in a situation which is already nerve-wracking enough and so that her performance is not even further distorted.

2. If a list is not supplied then teachers, textbook writers and candidates go in for a blanket insurance policy where they attempt to cover every possible eventuality and so spend time inadequately learning a great deal when they would be better employed efficiently learning considerably less.

I think these arguments are totally convincing for the sort of examination that O level was when I started teaching and they remain convincing to the extent that present-day examinations are still of that nature.

But we are moving into a period where language teaching has a different emphasis. We are talking about language for communication, communicative competence and all those things. We are moving away from the idea of language as a system to be manipulated towards the idea of language to be used for the transmission of meanings, and in particular the transmission of personal meanings rather than the meanings imposed by an examiner or a teacher. This is an area which the more thoughtful of the graded objectives schemes have been exploring over the last few years. That of the East Midland Regional Examinations Board (EMREB) and that of the Lothian area are probably the furthest forward in this idea of attempting to teach and assess communicative competence. In this situation the old arguments do not necessarily hold and arguments against such lists are being cogently urged. The first argument is that the essence of communication is unpredicability in at least two senses. First the information gap: there is no point in communicating if you already know what is going to be communicated. You are therefore filling the information gap which exists between you and your interlocutor. Second, though a conversation does at least start within a general framework of shared meanings, we do not know what people are going to say or what responses we are going to make or where the conversation might lead to or what subjects it might cover. The argument is then that since we cannot predict what a learner will want to say we cannot possibly lay down beforehand a list of words and structures which the learner might require in order to say it. Moreover - and this leads to the second argument - if we do do this we immediately confine the learner within the areas of the vocabulary and structures that we have laid down and therefore prevent him from expressing his personal meanings in the way that he ought to learn to express them. In that sense the defined syllabus of vocabulary and grammar is indeed a straitjacket on the learner.

Thirdly, there is the problem of authentic materials. We should be presenting learners with authentic texts in sound and print - authentic in the

sense that they are texts in the language intended for native language users in real life - radio broadcasts, magazine articles, etc. The producers of authentic written and spoken texts will not have a list at their elbow and no amount of analysis of existing texts will provide a complete list for dealing with any likely text. Indeed we should be teaching our pupils techniques for dealing with the unknown which is the very stuff of real communication. And that is the fourth argument - that at least we should encourage the proper exercise of that skill - coping with the unknown.

Fifthly, a major problem is the arbitrariness of a list. What has to go in it can lead to extraordinary debate - should we have pêche or banane or both? Which parts of devoir should we expect to be known, and which for production and which for reception only? All this can lead to enormously long, sterile, soul-destroying hours of discussion. Any final list is to a large extent arbitrary. Indeed all the present lists are remarkably primitive attempts at what might be done. In the first instance both the AEB and JMB 16+ lists say that their list is for active use. What they mean is that they are for production and these are the words which people will be expected to use to express their own meanings. This is of course acting quite contrary to the principle already established that candidates require their own personal repertoire for expressing their own meanings. It is true that some words on the list are marked for receptive use only but the lists are primarily for productive use. The second mistake is that within the words marked for receptive use only there is no distinction between the ones that are to be understood when heard and the ones that are to be understood when read. In many languages this may not present a problem but in English it does and in French this is definitely the case. In reading French many words are immediately comprehensible because they look exactly like or almost exactly like their English equivalents. Those same words when heard defy recognition because of the phonological system of French which is so very different from that of English. If we were to make a list of that sort, therefore, we would need to make a separate list for listening comprehension and reading comprehension, at least for French. This problem is not recognised by the examination boards at the moment.

All this seems to make lists a very dubious proposition. Are we then to have no lists at all of anything? Even the syllabuses aiming at the most communicative tasks have shied away from that. All the ones I know of have aimed at a variation of the pattern set by the Council of Europe Threshold Level. That is, a set of topics, notions, functions, etc, and then a set of illustrative words and phrases which are exemplary of the sorts of things that candidates are supposed to know. The French version, Un niveau-seuil, is even more explicit in its lists of words though continuing to say that these are only examples. Lothian goes in for similar examples, EMREB has what it calls 'target sentences' which are of the type that the candidate is supposed to know, similarly the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) new syllabus for preliminary French has again a set of words which are of the sort that candidates should know. I must admit that all this strikes me as a rather pious illusion. We know very well that teachers and candidates will take these as a defined syllabus and not as examples at all. And in

many cases they are quite right, because there is no other example that can be used. When RSA French puts down in its list très and beaucoup it is not saying that these are examples of the sorts of words you can use, it is telling you these are the ones you have to know because these are the only words that can be used in the situations where très and beaucoup are required. It seems to me that it is a delusion to assume that lists of this type are not going to be seen and used as defined syllabuses.

And if we define only topics and tasks are we not also restricting the areas of communication in advance? And if we don't, but only define levels of performance in terms of interaction, then what happens when the candidate is faced with a task where he does not know the actual words in which the task is framed, and therefore cannot understand the instructions or the preliminary information, or is stuck for a key word on which the task depends? The RSA preliminary English examinations define levels of performance and do list functions and types of task and types of material but do not list words. In the specimen examinations some questions arise about Ann Hathaway's cottage. What if the candidate has not met the word cottage? And does not know what a cottage is? In another part of the examination, the writing part, the candidate has to respond to an advertisement advertising legs for tables in which some of the alternatives are in steel. In fact, two out of three alternatives are in steel. What if the candidate has not come across the word steel? It would be unjust to assume the candidate incapable of fulfilling a similar task which did not have the word steel in it. He might be perfectly able to deal with wooden legs but not steel ones.

And if we do specify within topics how far do we go with the specification? There are obviously areas where specification is not possible. If we are going to ask people to be prepared to talk about their future careers, about their spare time interests, about what they like or do not like doing, about what they like or do not like eating, where they go for their holidays and what they do while they are there, then obviously nobody can predict what they might want to talk about on those occasions and they must have their private repertoire in order to deal with those topics. But if on the other hand we are going to ask them to talk about where they live or about the area in which they live in order to exchange information of this type with a native speaker, are we going to express surprise if they do not know the word maison or jardin? Are we going to consider them not quite up to scratch if words as common as these are not in their repertoire? If we say 'yes, they are expected to know these', then it seems to me we are required to say just precisely which words we are expecting them to know. If maison what about appartement and what about étage and what about escalier and ascenseur. If on the other hand we say 'no, you are not expected to know the word maison, or rather 'you won't lose marks for not knowing the word maison even when you are asked to be able to talk about where you live and so forth', then it seems to me (a) that we find ourselves in a nonsensical situation where we require people to talk about certain topics but do not say what the essential linguistic elements within those topics are, and (b) that we just drive teachers and candidates back to the old situation that I was in

when I started teaching, looking at past papers and working out for themselves what words and grammar are going to be needed within the examination framework as it appears from the papers that the candidates actually take.

Then there is the effect on teaching. Lists can lead to horrifying practices in classrooms, but so can the lack of lists. Similarly test types can have a curiously paradoxical effect. Let us look at a couple of role-plays:

Attract the grocer's attention.
Request something to eat.
Request something to drink.
Say how much you want.
Answer any question you are asked.
Pay and take leave.

As you see, candidates are here asked to ask for something they can eat. They are left to make their own choice of what they want to eat. If we take another role-play, a much more rigid one, they are required to produce the words for 'a kilo of potatoes and a packet of coffee':

(the grocer asks what you want)
1. Ask for a kilo of potatoes and a packet of coffee.
(he asks if there's anything else)
2. Say yes and ask for six peaches.

The first role-play is obviously much more communicative in the terms which we have been discussing than the second: the candidate is allowed to produce her own choice of food, reflecting presumably her own real likes and dislikes, whereas the second imposes a particular choice of food on her and she has to buy a packet of coffee whether she likes it or not. However, the effect upon learning is quite remarkable. If the learner from past papers realises that he is going to be asked for something to eat and he can choose for himself what it is that he has to put in that particular gap, then he will learn one item, let us say a packet of biscuits. If on the other hand the learner knows he is going to be asked for a particular amount of a particular commodity, and in the list provided with the examination there are fifteen sorts of amounts and commodities and he does not know which one he is going to be asked for, then he will learn fifteen things. In other words, the result of the communicative syllabus or test item is one item learnt, the result of the non-communicative syllabus is fifteen items learnt. The result for subsequent communication in the great wide world where anything can happen is that the non-communicative syllabus provides you with a great deal more flexibility in the genuine situation than the communicative syllabus does. That may be somewhat caricatural but there is an enormous amount of truth in it. It is one of the paradoxes with which learning and teaching are constantly bedevilled. It makes one aware of another element in the situation which we teachers and examiners possibly tend to forget in our enthusiasm for communicative competence. That is that, particularly in the situation with which I am now concerned - the

public examination usually taken at age 16+ - the learner is not primarily concerned with learning the language but with passing the examination. Every corner-cutting device, every shortest distance between two points will be taken by the learner in order to ensure a pass. If the learner was prepared to accept the spirit of the syllabus then we could perhaps rely on her learning fifteen words when she will need only one of her own choice in the examination. But that is not the case. If the learner is not required to learn a certain amount, he will not learn it.

What are we to do then? After a good deal of moving from one position to another, and I do not think I've stopped moving yet, I find myself at the moment coming back to the idea of a list of some sort, however arbitrary. Where authentic materials are used the words not expected to be known should be signalled in some way so that candidates are not put in the inferior psychological position of feeling ignorant and possibly resentful as well. This does not get the best out of people. Allowing dictionaries might help but there are enormous problems in that particular circumstance, the main one being that schools cannot afford them and many candidates cannot either. There should also be areas where candidates are specifically required to cope with what is expected to be unknown to them and these elements too should be signalled in some way. When it comes to production we need a list of topics, tasks, functions, and both general and specific notions. A minimum range of what is considered essential vocabulary and structure dealing with the topics and tasks in the most cursory way would be specified, but it would be made plain that candidates would be expected to have a sizeable personal repertoire where appropriate. Some way should be found to encourage (and that means, in examination terms, to reward) the learning of more words, the extending of personal vocabularies so that more areas can be dealt with, with more precision. I believe, for the moment at any rate, that the alternative of leaving it all to the candidate's choice to express his own personal meanings in his own personal way does not liberate him to do that, but, paradoxically, imprisons him in an impossible game of guessing what the examiner is going to require from him, and that is where we were when I started 27 years ago.

NOTES

1. An archive concerning graded objectives in modern language learning schemes (syllabuses, tests, some explanatory and/or discussion papers) is held by CILT in the Language Teaching Library (20 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AP) and can be consulted there.

2. The Yorkshire Regional Examinations Board has now been combined with the West Yorkshire and Lindsey Regional Examining Board (TWYLREB) to form the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Examinations Board.

3. POSTSCRIPT. Soon after this paper was written the GCE and CSE Boards' Joint Council for 16+ National Criteria issued its Recommended

statement of 16+ national criteria for French. This document took into account a considerable consultation exercise in which individual teachers, language associations and any other interested parties had been asked for their views. There was widespread approval and no criticism of the suggestion that the 'syllabus content should be closely defined, preferably in terms of: tasks to be performed, topic areas to be covered, vocabulary and structures, notions and functions to be used productively and/or receptively.'

# 9. CONTRASTIVE PRAGMATICS AND THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNER'S PERSONALITY

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This paper was first presented at an international conference on cross-language analysis and second language acquisition (Jyväskylä, Finland, 1982). It is also to be published in Applied Linguistics (Oxford University Press), vol 4 no. 3, autumn 1983, and is published here with permission.

## INTRODUCTION

One reason why foreign language teaching keeps so many people in employment (not only in classrooms, but also as methodologists and theorists in various fields) is that as we devise more and more techniques for dealing with the problems we encounter, we also discover that language learning is more complex than we had thought. This means that new problem areas emerge for us to try to understand and solve.

Thus, not long ago, it looked as if we could overcome the basic learning problem by devising techniques for forming habits. Dialogues and pattern drills seemed the ideal solution. Then it became clear again that we could not neglect the cognitive dimension of language learning: we must also ensure that the learner internalises the underlying system of rules. We then realised that even if we found a foolproof way of getting people to acquire and operate this system, this would still not be enough, because they also need to know the rules and conventions for using the system. To use two examples (Thomas 1982), they have to learn that 'We must get together sometime' can be used as a polite formula for taking leave from somebody, as well as a statement of firm intention; or that if they wish to ask for directions in the street, 'Tell me please the way to ...' is not the most appropriate way of doing so in English. Nor does the problem end there. The learner is faced with other dimensions of communicative performance which go beyond a knowledge of structure, such as the conventions for managing conversations. Indeed, there seem to be so many facets of communicative ability that the task of teaching it can appear to take on monumental proportions. Small wonder that we derive such hope from those researchers who assure us that it will develop through natural processes, once we learn how to structure the classroom environment properly.

## SOME RECENT STUDIES

Some recent contrastive studies have highlighted clearly some of the problems that learners face in the domain of communicative performance. They have shown how different speech communities prefer different strategies for 'doing things' with language. They have also shown how these differences may lead learners to produce inappropriate speech behaviour

because they transfer their mother-tongue conventions into their use of the foreign language. I will give a few examples from papers which have appeared recently, before discussing some of the problems which they raise for foreign language teaching.

**Choosing ways of performing speech acts**

At the level of the single speech act, Blum-Kulka (1982) has shown how Hebrew speakers are likely to use more direct ways of making requests than English speakers. For example, the conventional Hebrew way of asking directions in the street is the structural equivalent of 'Where is the ...?', while the English speaker is more likely to use an indirect form such as 'Can you tell me the way to ...?'. The English-speaking learner of Hebrew tends to be less direct than the native Hebrew speaker, in accordance with his or her mother-tongue conventions. Presumably an accumulation of such instances might make the speaker give an unintended impression of subservience or tentativeness. Conversely, if Hebrew-speaking learners of English transfer their mother-tongue norms into their English speech behaviour, they risk giving an impression of rudeness.

English-speaking learners of German, too, are likely to produce an unconventionally high degree of indirectness in their foreign-language speech. This was illustrated during one of my own early visits to Germany. When the time came to pay the bill in a restaurant, I used the German structural equivalent of 'Can I pay, please?' (that is: 'Darf ich bitte zahlen?'). The waiter informed me that I should not sound as if I were asking him a favour but should be firmer and more authoritative, by saying 'Zahlen, bitte!'. Kasper (1979) and House and Kasper (1981) show how German learners of English may deviate from the conventions in similar ways, but in the opposite direction.

**Deciding whether to perform a speech act**

Moving from different ways of expressing a speech act to the question of whether to express a speech act at all, Cohen and Olshtain (1981) have again reported differences between native speakers of Hebrew and English, this time in the domain of apologising. For example, in role-playing they found that Hebrew native speakers were less likely than English speakers to express apologies or to offer repair in certain situations, such as forgetting to take their sons out shopping. It is important to note, however, that there was still a 66% probability of these speech acts occurring in Hebrew (compared with 92% probability in English) in the situation mentioned. Over seven different situations, there is consistently more likelihood of an apology occurring in English native speech than in Hebrew native speech, but the Hebrew speakers are still more likely to apologise than <u>not</u> to apologise.

As a further example, Loveday (1982b) argues that Japanese speakers are less inclined than English speakers to express open disagreement. The result can be that their conversation seems dull and over-polite when they use

English with westerners. The Japanese speaker of English is also likely to transfer ceremonial formulae for apologies or thanks, creating a similar impression. Conversely, of course, the English native speaker may appear brusque and impolite to the Japanese.

### Conversational strategies

House-Edmondson (1981) has studied how German and English speakers employ 'conversational strategies' in order to gain their conversational goals. For example, if a person wants to borrow gramophone records, he or she may support the request with strategic moves such as:

(a) 'Sweeteners', which remove potential objections to the request (e.g. 'I'll take good care of them').
(b) 'Disarmers', which anticipate possible complaints (e.g. 'I hate asking you of all people, 'cos I know how careful you are with your records, but ...').
(c) 'Expanders', which provide the hearer with more detail about the matter than is strictly necessary.

House-Edmondson found that German and English speakers differ in their preferred strategies. Thus in the course of 48 role-plays based on everyday situations, 'disarmers' were used 24 times by English speakers but only five times by German speakers; 'sweeteners' were used eighteen times in English and thirteen times in German. On the other hand, German speakers made considerably more use than English speakers of 'expanders' (34 occurrences compared with six).

## SOME PROBLEMS FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

As we saw in the previous section, there is good evidence about how speakers of different languages prefer different strategies for performing speech acts, for choosing which speech acts are appropriate in specific situations, and for achieving their interactional goals. There is equally good evidence that learners often transfer their native-language preferences to their foreign-language performance. We might conclude, then, together with some other writers, that this indicates a further dimension of communicative competence that needs to be taught. However, there are two main problem areas which must first be considered.

### Norms and individual choice

The studies described in the previous section show trends and preferences. However, there is clearly a wide range of permissible behaviour, even among native speakers. Within this range, individual speakers can make choices which reflect their own personality or behavioural style. In other words, we are not dealing with set patterns of behaviour which can be passed on as 'norms' to foreign language learners. If we did this, we would be denying learners the important freedom which native speakers possess: the freedom to adapt aspects of their communicative performance to express their own personality and behavioural style.

It is clearly impossible to define the borderline between choices which are due to language norms and choices which are due to personal factors. Language is closely bound up with personality at every level, and indeed, an individual's personality has been deeply influenced by the kinds of linguistic interaction that he or she has experienced. There is the further difficulty, as we shall see in What is personality (below), that the term 'personality' can itself be interpreted in widely different ways, and the concept is variously taken to involve anything from deep internal traits to comparatively superficial behavioural preferences. However, a foreign language teacher has to reach some working definition of where the boundary of language teaching lies. In particular, at what point do patterns of language use cease to be part of a repertoire which learners should (if possible) be taught to incorporate into their own speech behaviour? At what point do they become reflections of an individuality which both native speakers and foreign learners should be left free to express?

Referring to an example mentioned earlier, I remember that it took some time before I could call out firmly 'Zahlen, bitte!' without a slight sense of unease at behaving in a way that was not my own. Yet this was a comparatively low-level choice between alternative speech-act realisations. The problem becomes more acute as higher levels of choice become involved: for example, when we consider whether to encourage Japanese learners of English to express disagreement more readily, German learners of English to use more 'disarmers', or English-speaking learners of Hebrew to be less profuse with their apologies.

A useful step towards forming decisions on these issues would be for researchers to gather more information not only on the most frequently used strategies of speakers of different languages, but also on the range of variation within which individuals can make choices without appearing (for example) offensive or subservient. We could then help learners to avoid those patterns of speech behaviour that might be detrimental to their personal relationships, without restricting too tightly their scope for expressing their own personality through their own preferred strategies. This point brings us on to the theme of the next subsection.

**Learners' 'external' and 'internal' needs**

The studies which we have been discussing bring us face to face, in an extreme form, with a problem which is already inherent in the currently popular 'communicative' approach to language teaching. This approach can be seen from two viewpoints which, so far, have not been properly reconciled.

On the one hand, a communicative approach can involve analysing what meanings the learners will need to express, and the language which will enable them to express these meanings appropriately. Language items are then specified as something external to learners, which they should try to attain. Clearly, the studies described in the previous section could be seen

as adding a further dimension to what learners must try to attain. We could simply add this dimension to the specification of objectives.

On the other hand, a communicative approach is concerned with the internal needs of the learner to relate to the language, integrate it with his own cognitive make-up, use it to express his own self, and so on. This requirement may work in direct conflict with the external specification of needs mentioned above. It means that, rather than imposing language which may seem alien to the learner and his psychological needs, we should try to ensure that he can identify with the language he uses and invest his own personality in it.

We are thus in a dilemma. On the one hand, as I mentioned, we are discovering new aspects of communicative ability which we could turn into teaching objectives. On the other hand, if we become over-zealous in increasing the externally-specified body of language to be learnt, we may merely reduce the learner's chance of relating to the foreign language at a deeper level and using it as a vehicle for truly personal communication.

As a further consequence, we may increase the sense of threatened identity or alienation from the self that sometimes accompanies foreign language learning (cf Brown 1980, Stevick 1976). We may unwittingly help to ensure that the speaker of the foreign language remains a 'reduced personality', since we are taking away so many of those choices and interpersonal strategies through which, over the course of his life, his personality has learnt to find its expression.

In a conference paper in Finland (1982), Jaakko Lehtonen used the term 'communicative anxiety' to describe the reluctance which many Finns feel in speaking a foreign language. It also describes the feeling of many other foreign language speakers. It seems likely that this communicative anxiety will inevitably increase if we go too far in specifying the patterns of communication which the learner must try to use and taking away his scope for self-expression through the foreign language. Indeed, I feel that if I were obliged to use some of the 'typically English' ways of expressing things that are sometimes presented in courses for foreigners, I would be a constant prey to communicative anxiety even in my own native language.

## WHAT IS PERSONALITY?

The extent to which a learner is happy to adopt the speech patterns of the foreign community depends to a large extent on his individual attitudes and orientation. Though I believe that the arguments in the previous section are valid for a large proportion of learners, there are also many learners (perhaps those with an extremely 'integrative' orientation?) who are eager to adopt foreign patterns, even to the extent implied by the studies described in Some recent studies (above). How can we reconcile this with the argument that these different patterns are closely related to the expression of personality? Must we take the viewpoint that such learners are somehow able to develop a 'dual personality', or even that they have to suppress their

'true self' in order to perform a foreign role? Here I will touch briefly on this issue by relating it to two conceptions of 'personality' which compete with each other in current psychology.

The traditional view of personality, connected with psychologists such as Freud, is that it consists of underlying 'traits', such as 'aggressiveness', 'friendliness' or 'introversion'. These are consistent over time and can be traced back to experiences in early childhood. They exist independently of specific situations. Therefore, if a person's actual behaviour is not consistent with his basic personality traits (e.g. an aggressive person behaves in a restrained manner or vice versa), we must explain this with notions such as repression or sublimation. Presumably, if foreign language performance entails far-reaching changes in one's habitual patterns of behaviour, it must also involve, under this conception of personality, phenomena such as repression.

However, a more recent view of personality calls into question the idea of consistent underlying traits. Psychologists such as Mischel (1973, 1981) point out that if we observe an individual's behaviour across different types of situation, there is in fact much less consistency than has usually been supposed. Almost every person shows considerable variation in behaviour patterns and it is quite 'normal' to be, for example, an introvert in some situations but an extrovert in others, or honest in some situations but dishonest in others. As a person gathers experience in life, he learns to associate certain kinds of behaviour with certain categories of situation, because the association leads to outcomes which he values. Behaviour thus results from an interaction between situations and person-variables. The latter would include a person's abilities, values, perceptions and categorisations of situations, and so on. In the present context, important features of this model are that (a) a person's behaviour patterns are flexible, and (b) a person can come to associate a different pattern of behaviour with a situation, if his perception of that situation changes or if he learns that this new behaviour can lead to more valued outcomes. In other words, if we now transfer this general discussion to the specific issue in question here: an otherwise equivalent interpersonal situation could, presumably, 'switch in' one pattern of behaviour in a native-language context but a different pattern of behaviour in a foreign-language context, because the two situations are perceived differently and because different behaviour is expected to lead to desired outcomes. One such desired outcome might be a sense of integration with a particular speech community (native and/or foreign), achieved by adopting appropriate speech behaviour.

If this second model is valid, it seems to offer a more satisfactory account of foreign language learning in its relationship to personality. For example, it may be fruitful to see differences in foreign language performance as due, in part, to the learner's degree of readiness to re-categorise situations when these occur in the foreign-language context, and to his willingness to associate new behaviour patterns with them. These two factors would be partly due, in turn, to the value that the learner attaches to the expected outcomes of these changes.

It may also be fruitful to relate all these issues to a theory of role-performance as in Littlewood (1975). Within this framework, learners can be seen as aiming to perform their foreign-language role at different levels, which have different implications in terms of behavioural change. For example, the 'functional' or 'actional' levels do not involve more than comparatively superficial aspects of behaviour, whereas the 'acquired' level involves much closer identification with the new foreign patterns. It is at this deeper level that learners might aspire to produce the kinds of change implied by the contrastive studies described under Some recent studies. Some of the inner mechanisms for these changes might be suggested by the interactional model of personality described above.

## CONCLUSION

Contrastive studies of communicative performance serve to emphasise that we have reached a phase in foreign language teaching where we must think more intensively about the relationship between learning and the individual personality. We must consider questions such as:

(a) What do we mean by the concept of 'personality'?

(b) How does personality relate to patterns of communicative performance?

(c) What policy should we adopt towards the teaching of foreign communicative patterns, when these conflict with learners' natural choices?

This is clearly an area where delicate compromises are necessary, since the dictates of the learner's personality must often conflict with the expectations of the foreign community. For example, if it is true that westerners expect Japanese speakers of English to disagree more openly, but the Japanese prefer a different communicative style, it is difficult to see how both parties could be completely satisfied by any 'solution'. However, we might bear in mind that all social interaction involves some degree of compromise between conflicting impulses and expectations. In this respect, intercultural communication is not unique, though it poses the problem more acutely.

Within the overall development of foreign language teaching, we are now in a situation which is interestingly different from that of ten years ago. Then, the nature of the task was clear-cut in general outline: to analyse the skills involved in foreign language use, to develop teaching objectives based on this analysis, and to devise the most efficient ways possible of helping learners to reach these objectives. Now, for the first time, we have to consider that, even if we did find a way to teach foreign communicative performance efficiently in all its aspects, this might not be in the learners' own best interests.

I would also add that if all advanced speakers of (say) English as a foreign language performed in a fully 'English' way, producing an impressively native

array of indirect requests, apologies and disarmers, so that their speech patterns became as standardised and indistinguishable as the hamburger, the world would be a much duller place.

PROBLEMS IN LANGUAGE

# 10. SPEAKING ENGLISH WITH THE APPROPRIATE DEGREE OF CONVICTION

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## INTRODUCTION

Acquiring sociolinguistic competence in a language involves learning something of the social and cultural values of those who speak the language. Second language learners who want to use the language appropriately with native speakers need to be able to interpret and convey not only referential or propositional meaning but also affective or communicative meaning (Wilkins 1976, Kennedy 1979). This will involve learning something about the way different social relationships and social situations are perceived, evaluated, and reflected in the choice of linguistic forms in social interactions in the speech community.

An example will serve both to illustrate this general point and to introduce the specific aspect of sociolinguistic competence which is the focus of this paper. (1) is an exchange between two people of different status in the same administrative structure. B is responsible to A, who is of higher rank.

(1) A You're coping with the numbers at present then.
B Well apparently there's a chance we may get some extra help.

B's response is multifunctional: it is informative, expressive, tentative and polite, among other things. B asserts new information which implicitly contradicts A's assertion. Hence B informs and disagrees with A. But in addition B expresses uncertainty regarding the validity of the proposition 'we get some extra help', by using the forms apparently, a chance and may. These serve to attenuate or reduce the illocutionary force of the assertion and this is one way of expressing deference or being polite to one's addressee. In other words B informs and disagrees with A very tactfully.

The example illustrates the fact that the same lexical items may simultaneously convey different aspects of meaning. In particular, they may express both modal and affective meaning. Modal meaning involves the speaker's attitude to the content of the utterance[1]. Affective meaning expresses the speaker's attitude to the addressee in the social context of utterance.

In (1) the items apparently, a chance and may convey epistemic modality: i.e. the speaker's assessment of the validity of the proposition or the extent of the speaker's epistemic commitment to its truth. In other words they express the fact that the proposition 'we get some extra help' is a possibility rather than a certainty in the speaker's estimation.

The same lexical items function affectively, however. They reduce the illocutionary force of the assertion, and thus convey the information tentatively. In general, linguistic devices which express degrees of certainty about the validity of information also serve to boost or tone down the force of speech acts. In particular, lexical devices used to signal the speaker's uncertainty may also be used to weaken or attenuate the illocutionary force of an utterance. This is a major linguistic strategy in English, and perhaps in all languages, for expressing deference to one's addressee (Brown and Levinson 1978).

The example also highlights the fact that the second language learner's task is not simply a matter of acquiring linguistic forms. The learner must develop a degree of sociocultural sensitivity in order to accurately interpret and appropriately use the target language. It is obviously important that learners should be able to understand and express epistemic modality. No-one wants to make dogmatic assertions all of the time. It is equally important that they should be able to recognise and use such forms in expressing affective or communicative meaning, to strengthen and weaken the illocutionary force of speech acts. Most addressees expect and appreciate linguistic consideration of this kind.

In this paper I will first discuss the expression of epistemic modality and the different degrees of certainty which may be signalled lexically in English, providing examples of the range of grammatical patterns in which such items occur. I will then consider the ways in which these lexical devices may be used to signal affective meaning, boosting or toning down the illocutionary force of speech acts in particular social contexts. Finally I will suggest some possible implications of the discussion for learners of English as a second language.

## EXPRESSING EPISTEMIC MODALITY

Native speakers of English express degrees of doubt and certainty about propositions in a variety of ways, both verbal and non-verbal. It is possible, for example, to convey doubt by means of gestures or by facial expression, by shaking the head slowly from side to side, for instance, or by narrowing one's eyes. The following extract from a children's story uses two different devices for expressing disbelief, and incidentally demonstrates the interpretive competence expected of young children.

(2) 'One day George wanted to impress Martha.
'I used to be a champion jumper', he said.
Martha raised an eyebrow.
'And', said George, 'I used to be a wicked pirate.'
'Hmmm', said Martha.
George tried harder....' (Marshall 1982, p 1. My underlining.)

The major linguistic devices for conveying degrees of certainty concerning the validity of a proposition are prosodic and lexical devices, at least in English. All languages provide strategies for expressing epistemic modality,

but the particular devices used differ from one language to another (see for example Schubiger 1965). In some languages, moreover, speakers cannot avoid providing information concerning the precise degree of their commitment to the truth of every proposition they assert (Lyons 1981, p 239). This information is obligatorily expressed by means of a device such as a verb-affix (cf Kiparsky and Kiparsky's comments on Hidatsa, for instance, 1971, p 367). In English speakers may choose whether or not to explicitly signal the extent of their epistemic commitment to a proposition, and they also have some choice concerning the linguistic devices with which to do so. This paper focuses on the lexical devices they may use.

The underlined items in (3) and (4) express different degrees of certainty concerning the validity of the information asserted.[2]

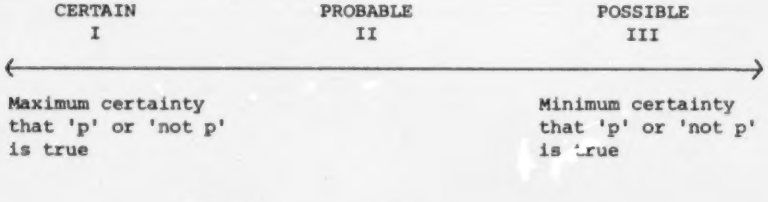
(3) Maybe they're picking up the naughty ones.
(4) Obviously one wasn't going to take Nixon's word for what happened.

On a scale of certainty or probability maybe expresses less certainty than obviously. In order to discuss the different degrees of certainty which different lexical items convey it is necessary to establish discrete categories at points along such a scale. The following three categories provide a useful basis for classifying the lexical devices used to express epistemic modality in English.

I CERTAIN : the speaker asserts with certainty that the proposition ('p' or 'not p') is true.
II PROBABLE : the speaker asserts that the proposition ('p' or 'not p') is probably true.
III POSSIBLE : the speaker asserts that the proposition ('p' or 'not p') is possibly true.

Although inevitably somewhat arbitrary these categories are compatible with the distinctions made by Leech and Svartvik (1975) and Wilkins (1976) in their discussions of scales of certainty and likelihood, differing only in the way negation is handled. I would argue that the categorisation presented here provides an intuitively more satisfying as well as a more economical account of the interrelationship of degrees of certainty with negation. Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between these three categories along a scale which extends from maximum to minimum certainty concerning the truth or validity of what is being asserted in the proposition.

Figure 1. Scale of Certainty



Let me provide examples of lexical items from each category, illustrating at the same time the variety of grammatical patterns in which such items may occur. (A summary of the major grammatical patterns is provided in the Appendix.) Examples (5), (6) and (7) contain lexical items expressing certainty concerning the validity of their propositions.

(5) There's bound to be a lot in it for him.
(6) It's quite clear that he's very upset about it.
(7) There's no way your dad could do it.

In (5) the modal verb be bound to expresses certainty concerning the validity of the proposition 'there be a lot in it for him'. In (6) an adjectival phrase and in (7) a noun phrase express certainty concerning the propositions 'he be very upset about it' and 'not your dad can do it' respectively. The underlined lexical items convey the fact that the speaker is fully committed to the validity of the information contained in the propositions.

The underlined items in (8), (9) and (10) express the speaker's assessment that the proposition is probably true in each case.

(8) It's odds-on he'll run for election.
(9) It appears the bolt broke.
(10) I doubt that she's coming now.

It is worth noting that doubt in (10) expresses the speaker's view that the proposition 'she be coming now' is improbable. Lexical items expressing improbability, e.g. verbs such as doubt and don't think and adjectives such as unlikely, are appropriately assigned to category II (PROBABLE) on the scale of certainty, since they are most accurately and economically analysed as expressing the speaker's assessment that 'not p' is probable.

The greatest doubt or least certainty concerning the validity of the proposition is expressed by items which belong to category III (POSSIBLE). Utterances (11), (12) and (13), as well as (3) above, contain lexical items from this category.

(11) Perhaps the children weren't listening.
(12) There's a chance that Mary Jo has been.
(13) It might be a boarding school.

(3) and (11) involve adverbials or 'modal particles' (Brown and Levinson 1978), while (12) and (13) illustrate a noun phrase and a modal verb expressing the view that the proposition is only possibly true.

These three categories have proved valuable in an empirical analysis of the lexical devices used to express degrees of certainty in a wide range of written and spoken material (see Holmes forthcoming). They provide a basis for comparing the range and frequencies of such items in different kinds of text, as well as for the kind of contrastive analysis involving different languages which is so useful to older second language learners.

In those previous studies of modality which have supplied frequency data, modal verbs have been the focus of the researcher's interest (Hermerén 1978, Coates 1980). It seems useful to note, then, that at least in expressing epistemic modality native speakers use lexical items from a variety of grammatical classes (see Table 1).

Table 1. Relative frequency (expressed as a percentage) of the major grammatical classes used to express epistemic modality

| Grammatical class | Speech | Writing | Total Corpus |
|---|---|---|---|
| Modal verbs | 42.4 | 36.8 | 40.2 |
| Lexical verbs | 31.5 | 35.9 | 33.3 |
| Adverbial constructions | 21.5 | 12.8 | 18.1 |
| Nouns | 2.3 | 7.7 | 4.5 |
| Adjectives | 2.3 | 6.6 | 4.0 |

Although modal verbs are undoubtedly the most frequently occurring devices, lexical verbs and adverbial constructions are by no means infrequent means of expressing degrees of certainty.

The table provides only very gross frequency information. A more detailed analysis would require more space than is available in this paper (but see Holmes forthcoming). Nevertheless, I can perhaps suggest something of the richness and complexity of the data by commenting briefly on one small point: i.e. an interesting distinction which can be made between personalised, impersonalised and depersonalised forms.

Personalised forms refer explicitly to the speaker's personal involvement in assessing the validity of the proposition. They are constructions which include a first person pronoun (I, we, me, us, my, our). Utterances (14), (15) and (16) provide examples of personalised forms.

(14) I think they're glorious.
(15) It seems to me that that's a confession of weakness.
(16) It's my suspicion that he's in for a shock.

Impersonalised forms, by contrast, make no reference to the speaker in presenting an assessment of the validity of the proposition. Expressions of epistemic modality in natural languages are almost always subjective, as

both Lyons (1977, p 797) and Palmer (1979, p 3) have pointed out. Nevertheless, the subjectivity may be concealed by the use of impersonalised forms such as sentential adverbs, the passive voice, or constructions using impersonal pronouns. (17) and (18) illustrate the use of impersonalised forms expressing certainty and probability respectively.

(17) Clearly the case of Flight 191 called into question the competence of the FAA itself.
(18) And it's likely that Wayne came to think of himself in this way.

While the distinction between personalised and impersonalised forms is suggested by Leech and Svartvik (1975, p 132), the term depersonalised has been coined to refer to a group of forms used to express epistemic modality, which could be regarded as a distinct sub-category of impersonalised forms. The function of depersonalised forms is to relieve the speaker (or, more often, writer) of responsibility for the validity of the information contained in the proposition. Depersonalised forms explicitly or implicitly assign responsibility for information or views whose reliability is at issue, to some party other than the speaker. They include verbs such as argue, claim, contend, and maintain when used with third person subjects, as well as adverbials such as allegedly, reportedly, reputedly and supposedly (cf Quirk and others 1972, p 513).

There are many forms, including all the 'reporting' verbs, e.g. announce, comment, declare, say, etc, which may be used to quote or report the content of discourse, usually for the benefit of those who weren't present when it occurred. In most cases the validity of the information thus reported is not at issue. As in the case of any unmodalised declarative, the information is implicitly conveyed as true or certain (cf Lyons 1977, p 808-9). I would not want to include such forms as examples of depersonalised forms.

Depersonalised forms express epistemic modality: their function is in fact precisely to signal that the validity of the proposition is an issue. Part of the semantic content of a depersonalised form consists of a message concerning the extent of the validity of the proposition. The source to whom responsibility for the validity of the proposition is attributed may be explicit or implicit, as (19) - (22) illustrate.

(19) Critics claim the flaws exist.
(20) According to one biographer [she] downed a quart of whisky a day.
(21) Birendra has reportedly intimidated representatives.
(22) The water is rumoured to be poisoned.

The examples illustrate that personalised, impersonalised and depersonalised forms involve a range of grammatical constructions. Depersonalised forms tend, however, to occur most frequently in journalistic writing where they are predominantly expressed by a wide range of lexical verbs. Let me turn now to consider such contextual information more directly.

## AFFECTIVE MEANING IN CONTEXT

The discussion of epistemic modality and the description of the categories used to classify lexical items expressing degrees of certainty has focused on the speaker's attitude to the content of the proposition asserted. There are many social contexts in which this is the primary function of epistemic devices. Contexts of debate and discussion, speculation and hypothesis, for instance, are rich in lexical items functioning to express the speaker's confidence or reservations concerning the validity of the information asserted.

However, as illustrated in example (1), such devices may equally function as responses to social features of an interaction. Lexical items expressing certainty may be used to boost or strengthen the illocutionary force of an utterance for affective or interpersonal reasons. Similarly, lexical items expressing some degree of doubt (i.e. classified in categories II or III above) may function as weakeners, toning down the illocutionary force of speech acts in order to express the speaker's views appropriately in a particular social context. I have used the term Booster to describe lexical items expressing strong conviction, which strengthen or boost the illocutionary force of the speech acts in which they occur. Downtoners, on the other hand, are lexical items which attenuate or decrease the illocutionary force of speech acts, expressing the speaker's views tentatively.[3]

Lexical items expressing degrees of certainty tend to occur frequently with affective meaning, expressing attitudes to the addressee, in situations of social uncertainty: e.g. where status differences are relevant (i.e. involving the power semantic) or where speakers do not know each other well (i.e. involving the solidarity semantic).[4] Where a speaker feels socially out-classed, ill-at-ease, or simply wishes to avoid offending addressees who are of greater social status or who are not familiar, it is common to find utterances softened or attenuated by Downtoners. Expressions of opinion, particularly opinions which differ from those of the addressee, are typically mitigated in such contexts. Consider the following examples.

(23) Teacher: I think these must be middle class boys. What do you think? Melanie.
Melanie: I don't know - they could be working class kids couldn't they? (c)

(24) Interviewer (to Prime Minister): I had the feeling that with all the talk about the future that perhaps some of the Ministers were not talking quite so strongly in an election year context and I wondered whether perhaps you were surprised that...

On the other hand the social superior or the statusful person in an interaction may equally choose to attenuate or tone down the illocutionary force of a speech act, particularly one with negative affect: e.g. criticism, disagreement, denial. Teachers who have expended some effort in encouraging taciturn pupils to contribute to a discussion frequently respond

to inappropriate contributions with mitigated or toned down negative feedback. However well justified responses such as Complete rubbish or Quite wrong might be in terms of their truth value, responses such as (25) and (26) are less likely to inhibit further pupil participation in the interaction:

(25) Might be I suppose but doesn't seem very likely to me.
(26) I don't know - it could be - although it's more likely perhaps to be a day school.

Downtoners may also be used to weaken the force of positively affective speech acts such as compliments, as the underlined item in (27) demonstrates.

(27) It's good I suppose.

More frequently, however, they are found mitigating the force of 'negative' speech acts, or of acts which, at a more abstract level, can be interpreted as threatening the addressee's 'negative face wants' (Brown and Levinson 1978, p 67). Devices for mitigating the force of directives, for instance, have been the focus of a great deal of recent research (e.g. Fraser 1978, Fraser and Nolan 1981, Rintell 1981, Zimin 1981). Much less attention has been paid to Downtoners mitigating 'representatives' and 'expressives' (using Searle's 1976 categorisation), and to Boosters.

Boosters are lexical items which increase or strengthen the illocutionary force of a speech act. Like Downtoners they may occur in contexts of social uncertainty, but, unlike Downtoners, they reflect the addressee's uncertainty rather than the speaker's. Boosters strengthen speech acts functioning to reassure the addressee in a variety of ways. They frequently occur in response to a question, for instance, since questions generally express the speaker's uncertainty, as (28) illustrates:

(28) A Is this the right road?
B I'm quite certain that this is the right way. (c)

They may function to strengthen a denial or disagreeing utterance as in (29) where the Boosters are a response to the doubt implicit in A's question.

(29) A How can you argue that women in the party are taking a major role in matters of policy?
B Believe me they are very much involved.

A Booster may increase the illocutionary force of a compliment, as in (30), reassuring the addressee of the speaker's concern for his or her 'positive face wants' (Brown and Levinson 1978, p 67).

(30) It's very good - really.

Similarly Boosters may strengthen the expression of the speaker's

agreement, reassuring the addressee that they share the same views, opinions or assessment of the facts, for example. (31) provides an illustration from an interview where the interviewee concurs wholeheartedly with the opinion formulated by the interviewer.

(31) A Do you think that perhaps women are much more interested in personal growth rather than achievement in the in the er ambitious sense of it?
B Undoubtedly I think that's absolutely right yes.

Boosters may strengthen or increase the illocutionary force of a wide range of speech acts. They are essentially interactive, responsive devices, and are often used in situations where a speaker senses disbelief, doubt, uncertainty or the need for reassurance on the part of the addressee.

It is interesting in this respect to consider Lyons' statement that an unmodalised declarative asserts a proposition in the strongest possible form:

> 'It would be generally agreed that the speaker is more strongly committed to the factuality of 'It be raining' by saying It is raining than he is by saying It must be raining ... the very fact of introducing must, necessarily, certainly etc, into the utterance has the effect of making our commitment to the factuality of the proposition explicitly dependent upon our perhaps limited knowledge. There is no epistemically stronger statement than a categorical assertion...' (1977, p 808-9).

It is true that such items may express some qualification of the speaker's commitment to the proposition. (32) provides an example of must functioning in this way, expressing primarily modal meaning.

(32) I must have dropped my glove on the way over.

More often, however, lexical items such as must and certainly express primarily affective meaning, functioning as Boosters in response to the addressee's need for reassurance. (33) is a sympathetic response to an addressee who has broken his contact lenses; must boosts its illocutionary force.

(33) It must be hard to see.

Similarly certainly in (34) strengthens B's response to A's doubt:

(34) A Is Jeremy likely to stand then? [i.e. for election]
B Certainly he is - there'll be no stopping him.

In many social contexts, then, such forms (classified in category I, CERTAIN, above) function affectively, boosting the force of speech acts which respond to the addressee's doubts or social needs rather than modally, reducing the speaker's commitment to the validity of the proposition. They

respond to the implicit or explicit reservations of other participants in an interaction rather than expressing those of the speaker.

The discussion in this section has focused on the ways in which lexical items expressing epistemic modality may be used to communicate affective meaning in a range of speech acts. Knowing which forms to use, their effect on speech acts, and in what contexts they are appropriate, is part of the sociolinguistic competence of native speakers. It is one aspect of the learning task facing those who wish to become skilled users of English as a second language.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Learning to express and interpret modal meaning undoubtedly presents problems to second language learners. Lyons (1981, p 210) comments, for example, on the difficulty of accurately translating modal particles. Robberecht and Van Peteghem (1982) discuss some of the problems which French and Dutch students encounter when learning to express modal meaning appropriately in English. With reference to epistemic modality in particular, they say 'modal auxiliaries are generally underrepresented in the expression of epistemic modality by Dutch speaking students' (1982, p 35). And they claim that 'students have 'no feeling' for the various nuances' of English modal verbs (1982, p 36).

There is also evidence that second language learners do not use Downtoners and Boosters in the same way as native speakers of English. Schmidt (1978, p 7), for example, describes the inability of many non-native speakers to appropriately 'hedge' their utterances in a variety of contexts. And Scarcella and Brunak (1981) found that the Arabic speakers in their study used fewer such expressions than native speakers, that they used them inappropriately and that they 'lacked both a knowledge of their semantic function and distribution' (1981, p 68).

Native speakers use a variety of linguistic means to convey degrees of certainty and conviction.[5] For those learning English as a second or foreign language there seems some justification for focusing, at least initially, on lexical devices. Competence in the prosodic patterns of a second language, for example, is notoriously difficult to acquire. This is especially true for older learners, and for those learning the language formally in the classroom rather than acquiring it in the speech community where it is used. And there is no doubt that the prosodic patterns used to express epistemic modality are particularly complex (e.g. Halliday 1970, Coates 1980). Acquiring the vocabulary to express this aspect of meaning will certainly be easier, and such knowledge will often provide learners with an alternative linguistic strategy in situations where they feel unsure about the appropriate prosodic pattern. It is lexical devices, moreover, which are the major means of conveying epistemic modality in writing. Hence familiarity with such items is important for those who wish to read and write English competently.

Modal auxiliaries are another means of conveying degrees of certainty which, as the comments quoted above suggest, may prove troublesome to second language learners. The frequency data provided in Table 1 demonstrates, however, that there are native-like alternatives to the epistemic modals which so often present problems. Lexical verbs (including what Urmson (1963) describes as 'parenthetical verbs') and adverbials are by no means infrequent in the speech and writing of native speakers as ways of expressing certainty and conviction concerning the information asserted. Second-language learners who experience difficulties in using modal verbs appropriately may be reasonably encouraged to consider alternative more easily mastered lexical devices. Indeed, native speakers frequently use two or more such lexical items in 'modally harmonic combinations' (Halliday 1970, p 331; Lyons 1977, p 807), as (25), (26) and (31) illustrate. By using lexical items they feel confident about in combinations such as these, second language learners will find they have the resources to satisfactorily and appropriately express degrees of certainty and conviction in a wide range of contexts. Such strategies will often provide alternatives to the complicated prosodic patterns and modal auxiliaries which many learners find difficult to master.[6]

Overall lexical items expressing degrees of certainty make up about 3.5% of the words of any text. But this figure conceals the variation in frequencies which characterise different contexts. They are, for example, approximately twice as frequent in speech as they are in written texts. And this despite the fact that speakers also have available prosodic, paralinguistic and non-verbal means of conveying certainty and conviction. Clearly learners who wish to acquire competence in spoken English will need to give some attention to this aspect of meaning.

There is evidence from previous studies of modality (e.g. Hermerén 1978, Coates 1980) that the distribution of modal auxiliaries varies in different contexts. Hermerén comments, for example, on the frequency of modals in a 70,000-word written corpus:[7]

> 'The difference in number is most striking for the subcategories Sports and Letters to the Editor. The comparatively small number of modal forms in Sports may be explained by the natural predominance in sports texts of accounts of factual events. In Letters to the Editor, on the other hand, people are arguing for or against social phenomena, a situation which favours the use of modals' (1978, p 179).

Coates (1980) points out that in her corpus, which consisted of both spoken and written material, epistemic modals tend to occur more frequently in informal speech situations and in personal writings than in formal and impersonal contexts. In the material I examined this was true not just of modal verbs but of all lexical items expressing certainty and conviction.

Contextual information of this kind can be useful to the second language teacher in guiding the selection of material for practice in expressing and interpreting epistemic modality. Description and explanations of

uncontentious material contain few such devices, whereas discussions, debates and arguments are full of them. Written reports tend to expose readers to more impersonalised forms, whereas speech involves a greater proportion of personalised forms. And newspaper reports of others' views and opinions are a reliable source of depersonalised forms. Contentious topics and speculative tasks, in particular, will provide plenty of opportunities for learners to use expressions of certainty and conviction to convey their personal opinions, their hypotheses and their subjective evaluations.

Finally let me emphasise that the lexical items discussed in this paper serve at least two functions, often simultaneously. They express the extent of the speaker's certainty about the validity of what is being asserted, his or her attitude to the content of the proposition. They may also function affectively to express the speaker's attitude to the audience or listener by modifying the illocutionary force of the speech act. Items which express certainty may boost or strengthen the illocutionary force of a range of speech acts - a useful resource where the addressee seems dubious or uncertain or in need of reassurance. Items expressing uncertainty serve to decrease or attenuate the illocutionary force of speech acts, mitigating the negative or threatening criticism or disagreement, for instance, or expressing deference to the addressee and consideration for his or her negative face wants.

Asserting one's opinions or even one's view of the facts by means of unmodified and unmodalised declaratives is not always appropriate. In different contexts we are tentative and tactful or confident and reassuring. Second language learners who neglect the devices used to express certainty and conviction risk being considered abrupt, didactic, rude - or even passionless.

NOTES

1. The term 'speaker' should generally be understood to refer to speaker or writer, while 'utterance' is used to refer to both spoken and written data throughout the paper.

2. Unless marked (c), all examples are taken from a corpus of 50,000 words of spoken and written material covering a range of contexts, formal and informal, and a variety of topics. A full description of the corpus can be found in Holmes (forthcoming). (c) indicates that the example has been constructed either to supplement the data in the corpus or for reasons of economy where an attested example would require a great deal of contextualisation to render it intelligible.

3. These terms are used by Quirk and others (1972, p 439) but in a more restricted sense than that in which I have used them. Bolinger (1972, p 17) also uses the term 'booster', but in an even narrower sense than that in which it is used here.

4. The power semantic and the solidarity semantic are concepts explored by Brown and Gilman (1960) in relation to pronoun usage.

5. Exclamations and rhetorical questions are examples of syntactic devices which serve the same basic function as Boosters, whilst many tag questions serve the same function as Downtoners (see Holmes 1982).

6. Obviously more detailed information will be required on strategies which are genuine referential and communicative alternatives in different contexts.

7. It should be noted that this comment applies to all modal verbs, not just epistemic modals.

APPENDIX

**Grammatical patterns (excluding modal verbs) which may be used to express epistemic modality.**

p = proposition

1. **Verb**
   (a) I ___ that p : e.g think, suppose [Personalised]

   (b) (i) It ___ that p [Impersonalised]
   (ii) It ___ to me that p e.g. appear, seem [Personalised]

   (c) NP ___ that p : e.g. argue, claim [Depersonalised]

   Notes
   (a) Parenthetical verbs may occur in final position or interrupt the proposition
   (c) NP is [+ animate] and [3rd person]

2. **Adverbial**
   ___ p e.g. obviously, probably, perhaps [Impersonalised]

   e.g. allegedly, reportedly [Depersonalised]

   Adverbial elements often have considerable freedom of movement and may occur in final position or may interrupt the proposition.

3. **Noun**
   (a) There BE a ___ that p e.g. probability, chance [Impersonalised]

   (b) It BE my ___ that p [Personalised]
   e.g. view, opinion

   (c) In my ___ p [Personalised]

4. **Adjective**
   (a) That p BE ___ e.g. certain, possible [Impersonalised]

   (b) (i) It BE ___ that p e.g. clear, likely [Impersonalised]
   (ii) It BE ___ to me that p e.g. clear, apparent [Personalised]

   (c) I BE ___ that p e.g. certain, sure [Personalised]

   (d) NP BE ___ to VP e.g. certain, sure [Impersonalised]

**Note**

(d) NP is Subject of p; VP is predicate of p

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